1492. aa 31

A LETTER IN Answer to a BOOK ENTITULED, *Christianity not Mysterious.*

As also

To all Those who Set up for

REASON and EVIDENCE

In Opposition to

REVELATION and MYSTERIES.

By PETER BROWNE, B. D.
Sen. Fellow of *Trin. Coll. Dublin.*

LONDON,

Printed for *Robert Clavell*, at the *Peacock* in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard, 1697.

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May 6. 1697. *Narciſſus Dublin.*

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A

LETTER

for ye Parsonage House of Brympton 1711

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LETTER

In Anſwer to a BOOK

ENTITULED,

Chriſtianity not Myſterious.

SIR,

WHEN I ſent to borrow of you the Book Entituled, *Chriſtianity not Myſterious*, I little thought of drawing on my ſelf any trouble beyond the bare reading of it; but ſince you have deſir'd my thoughts of the matters contain'd in it, I was unwilling to refuſe. Though I muſt freely tell you, what you ſeem to own in your Letter, that I think my ſelf better imploy'd. And your ſaying, that it is no neglect in a Shepherd to leave his feeding of the Lambs, and go aſide for a while, to beat off any thing that comes to devour or infect them, wou'd not have prevail'd with me, if this had caus'd any intermiſſion in that buſineſs, which I hope will

turn to better account when I come to receive my Wages. But having a little time to ſpare, I ſhall perform what you deſire.

And I have done this the rather, for that you tell me the Book hath made ſome noiſe; and that the Author is countenanc'd, and encourag'd by ſome Men of Senſe. I don't much wonder at it; for every Man of Senſe is not a Man of true Religion; beſides it is not every Man of Reaſon and Integrity, hath leiſure to conſider it; and if they have, yet theſe ſort of abſtracted Diſcourſes, are out of the road of Men of Buſineſs.

What you obſerve is very true, that the generality of Men who write ſuch Books as theſe, and talk of them moſt, are thoſe of a mixt ſort of learning; Perſons of a miſcellaneous education, who have ſome inſight into moſt of the Sciences, but are throughly vers'd in none. And the talking of Idea's, and running endleſs diviſions upon them, is a cheap and eaſie way, ſome Men now adays have taken up, of appearing wiſe and learned to the world. Whereas the bottom of it all is no more than this, That Men of nice heads have agreed to ſpeak of plain things in a peculiar dialect of their own; which if they

were

were ſtript of thoſe terms of Art, and put into plain Language, have nothing in them more than what is obvious to the common ſenſe and reaſon of all Men. And the conſequence of uſing them ſo frequently in matters of Religion is generally, what is ſo viſible in this Author, that they darken the Subject; ſo that the Queſtion is loſt in a multitude of Words, and then Men wander far in purſuit of Truth, when they left it behind them at their firſt ſetting out.

But before I come to the particulars, I can't but take notice of that unreaſonableneſs of People, who never think a Writer ſufficiently confuted unleſs we follow him in all his wandrings; whereas in a ſubject of this nature it is enough to ſhew where he left the Road, and that he is not yet return'd into it. If a Man were to demoliſh a Fabrick, there is no neceſſity of doing it ſtone by ſtone; it is abundantly enough if he undermine and deſtroy thoſe Pillars which are the main ſupporters of it; for then it falls to the ground, and is no other than a heap of Rubbiſh, though many of the materials were very good in themſelves.

To any reaſonable conſidering Perſon it were a ſufficient Anſwer to this whole

Book, to ſhew in ſhort, how he miſtakes the Queſtion, and proceeds in it, all upon two falſe Suppoſitions: One in Logick, in the former part of his Book, *viz.*

That Evidence is the only ground of Perſwaſion.

The other in Divinity, in the latter part of it.

That now under the Goſpel the Veil is perfectly remov'd.

This wou'd ſatisfy them that he runs all the while upon a falſe ſcent; and they wou'd not take it ill, that we left him to wander by himſelf. But becauſe theſe are but few, in compariſon of thoſe who take things in the groſs, and can't ſo well diſcern the connexion and dependance of one thing upon another: And indeed becauſe Anſwers are deſign'd for ſuch as are not able to ſee into the fallacies, and not for thoſe who are; therefore I ſhall trace him ſtep by ſtep, and leave nothing in him unanſwer'd, that hath any appearance of reaſoning.

I ſhall be ſo far from endeavouring to contradict him in every thing, that I ſhall grant him all that poſſibly I can. The worſt

worſt of Hereticks ſpeak many things that are true; and the more we can with juſtice allow them, the plainer we ſhall make their Errors appear; and the more difficult it will be for them to proceed, for this obligeth them either to ſpeak to the pinch of the Queſtion, or be ſilent.

It can't be expected in the compaſs of a Letter, that I ſhould enter into any nice diſquiſitions about the nature of Faith in general; or of the myſteries of the Goſpel in particular; or of the uſe of Reaſon in Religion: For I am not now going to write a Book upon this ſubject; if I were it ſhould not be in anſwer to him. I ſhall at preſent only ſhew the weakneſs and folly of this Man's arguing; and lay open the Cheats and Fallacies, by which he is either deceiv'd himſelf, or wou'd impoſe upon others: That I may relieve the ſubject he treats of, from that darkneſs and obſcurity in which he has involv'd it, either through ignorance or deſign.

And firſt, there is great deceit in the very Title of the Book; CHRISTIANITY NOT MYSTERIOUS. For by theſe two words, as it appears by what follows, he wou'd raiſe a Notion in

the heads of People that Christianity, as it is now generally taught and receiv'd among us, is a Religion made up of dark ænigmatical Allusions, and absurd, irrational and unintelligible Notions; or else of the plainest things wrapt up in mysterious Rites and Ceremonies; and in short, that our most holy Faith, is no other than one great Riddle.

Whereas Christianity is so far from being *Mysterious*, that it is the plainest Institution in the World. All the necessary Points of Faith and Practice are so clear and obvious to every capacity, that it is a Religion calculated for all sorts of People. And therefore it is said of the times of the Gospel, *That God wou'd put his Law into their inward parts, and write it in their Hearts, and they should all know him even from the least of them to the greatest.* That which this Sophister wou'd have inferr'd from hence is, That every thing God should reveal in the times of the Gospel, Men should have as full and comprehensive a knowledge of, as they have of any thing in nature. But 'tis evident this expression was design'd to signifie the plainness of the Gospel, as to all matters of obligation upon Men's Consciences,

ſciences, in oppoſition to the obſcurity of the Law; which was ſo perplex'd with a multitude of Rites and Circumſtances of Duty, that it was troubleſom and tedious to learn and obſerve them all. And therefore it is ſaid in the ſame Text, *That they ſhould not then teach every Man his Neighbour; ſaying, Know the Lord*; becauſe all the neceſſary knowledge of him and his Laws, was then to be rendred plain and eaſy. And accordingly this is now the glory of our Religion; and its plainneſs is one great argument of its Excellence and Divinity: not but that there are ſome things revealed in the Goſpel, of which we are not now capable of any clear and diſtinct knowledge. So that there is a great deal of difference between theſe two expreſſions, *Chriſtianity not Myſterious*, and, *There are no Myſteries in Chriſtianity*. The firſt is very true, and the laſt is abſolutely falſe.

Or a Treatiſe ſhewing, that there is nothing in the Goſpel contrary to Reaſon.

Who among us ever ſaid there was? but if this had not been added, his Book wou'd have been the ſhorter by Fourteen Pages; and were it not for this, and ma-

ny other things in it, as little to the purpoſe, it had been only a ſtitcht Pamphlet, and cry'd about with Almanacks.

Nor above Reaſon.

This likewiſe is a dubious ſaying; for if it ſignifies that there are no expreſſions in the Goſpel, that it is impoſſible for us to know the meaning of, then it is very true: For tho ſome paſſages are difficult, yet every thing in the Goſpel is intelligible; and were there any expreſſion in it impoſſible to be underſtood, ſo much of it muſt have been writ to no purpoſe. But if by *not being above reaſon*, be meant that there is nothing ſpoke of in it, but what we have as compleat and perfect a knowledge of, as we have of any object of our Senſes, it is abſolutely falſe; as I hope will ſufficiently appear.

And thus the whole Title Page is nothing elſe, but equivocation and ſophiſm. However there is this to be ſaid for it, that it ſuits the Book very well; the main drift of which is, to ſet up Natural Religion in oppoſition to all Revelation; and theſe ſame Equivocations begun in the Title Page, run through every thing he ſays.

His

His Introduction, wherein he pretends to ſtate the Queſtion, requires no Anſwer; for we grant that the notion of a Myſtery is to be taken from the Holy Scriptures, and not from the opinion of *any private Doctor*, or *Council*, or *any infallible Head*: So there are Six Pages of Impertinence cut off already.

I ſhall only take notice, how he ſets out with a fling at the Divines, the Men he's all along ſo angry with, who gravely tell us,

That we muſt adore what we can't comprehend.

Yes, they tell us we muſt adore God, and yet we cannot comprehend him. Let him prove we can if he's able, and without giving himſelf or us any farther trouble, we will put the whole Controverſy to a ſhort iſſue, and let it lie upon this one point. And if he does not make out, that we have as full and comprehenſive a knowledge of the Nature and Attributes of God, as we have of any Propoſition in *Euclid*, then what will this Man deſerve for that arrogant expreſſion of his,

p. 87. Laſt Edition. *That the Divine Being himſelf cannot with more reaſon be accounted Myſterious, than the moſt contemptible of his Creatures.*

His buſineſs here was to have ſtated the Queſtion, and let us have known what was the true Notion of a Myſtery in Scripture. But inſtead of this he goes a great way about to tell us, that the true notion of a Myſtery is to be taken no where but from thence; which no one denies. And therefore ſince he hath not done it, I muſt: That both He and I may ſpeak to the purpoſe, and neither of us hereafter trouble the World with impertinence.

Now the cleareſt way I can think of, for doing of this, is to inſtance in ſome particular Myſtery of the Goſpel, and in that one for all, to let us ſee what a Chriſtian Myſtery is in the ſenſe of Scripture. I ſhall take the firſt I think of, that of the Reſurrection of our Bodies.

1 *Cor.* 15. 51, 52. Saint *Paul* ſpeaking of this ſays, *Behold I ſhew you a Myſtery, we ſhall all be chang'd in the twinkling of an eye.* Again

1 *Joh.* 3. 2. St. *John* ſpeaking of the ſame matter ſays, *It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be, but we know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him.*

From

From whence we ſee a Chriſtian Myſtery is ſomething which relates to another life, which it was impoſſible for us to know, without Divine Revelation; and now that it is reveal'd we know it but in part, and cannot fully comprehend it. Or ſhorter.

It is a Divine Truth reveal'd to us in part.

As particularly this of *our being changed at the laſt day into the likeneſs of Chriſt.* It is a truth relating to another life, which could never have enter'd into our heads to think of, unleſs it had been reveal'd to us from Heaven; And now that it is reveal'd to us *that we ſhall be like him,* yet we know nothing of the manner of it wherein this likeneſs will conſiſt.

So that in a Chriſtian Myſtery, there is ſomething we do underſtand, and ſomething that we are wholly ignorant of; and it is call'd a Myſtery in reſpect of both theſe,

1. It is call'd a Myſtery in reſpect of what we do know of it; becauſe it was a thing ſo hidden from us, that it was impoſſible

poſſible to diſcover it by thoſe powers of knowledge which we are now endu'd with. As we could never have known from reaſon, that good Chriſtians ſhould be *chang'd into the likeneſs of Chriſt*. Now it is this part of the Myſtery which makes it an Article of Faith, and obligatory upon our Conſciences to believe it. Becauſe we underſtand well what it is for a Body to be rais'd, and alter'd for the better, and we know perfectly what it is for one thing to be chang'd into the likeneſs of another.

2. It is call'd a Myſtery in reſpect of that part of it which as yet we have no notion of; becauſe 'tis utterly impoſſible for us in this life to attain to any knowledge of it by reaſon aſſiſted with the greateſt degree of revelation that is afforded us. And thus it is impoſſible for us in this life to have any notion of the manner of that change into the likeneſs of Chriſt, for 'tis expreſly ſaid, *That it doth not yet appear what we ſhall be.* From whence I ſhall infer only thus much at preſent, that what we do know, and what is yet conceal'd from us, are in groſs call'd the ſame Myſtery. And that as we are oblig'd to believe what is reveal'd of it, ſo likewiſe we are at the ſame time oblig'd from expreſs

preſs words of Scripture to believe, that there is more in it than we are now able to comprehend. Nay that there is ſomething in it which we have no notion *or Idea* at all of.

This is the notion of a Myſtery in the ſenſe of Scripture; and therefore now we ſee the Queſtion is not, *Whether a man can believe what he knows nothing of*, which no man in his wits ever yet affirm'd; for there is a flat contradiction in the terms; and yet this is the main thing he labours to diſprove, and by which he endeavours to confound his Readers. But the Queſtion is,

Whether there be not ſome things in the Goſpel, concerning which we are bound to believe, that there is much more in them than we are now able to comprehend.

If there be ſuch things, as it appears in this inſtance of the Reſurrection, then there is ſomething in the Goſpel that may properly be call'd a Myſtery; and in ſo ſtrict a ſenſe, that nothing elſe can be call'd a Myſtery with ſo great propriety of Speech, as will appear more fully hereafter.

The

The case would have been the same, had I taken any other Mystery for an instance, either the eternal Generation of the Son; or the Procession of the Holy Ghost; or the Union of the Divine and Human Nature; or the Operations of the Holy Spirit in the act of Grace; or the Felicity and Joys of Heaven, *&c.* and if it be requir'd I am ready to quit this, and take any other for an instance which he shall pitch upon.

Now this is the thing that lay upon him to disprove; but he durst not go about proving or disproving any thing, till he has perplex'd the matter in hand, and amus'd his Reader with fantastical terms and distinctions. If he had meant honestly, and thought himself able to go through with what he undertook; he would have spoke plain undisguis'd Reason and proceeded immediately to the proof of the Question. But instead of this he finds it necessary to spend above one third of his Book in losing of it: wherefore I must take my leave of it for some time as he doth, to rescue the subject from obscurity, and force this Man to speak plainly and intelligibly.

And

And firſt he tells us, *That reaſon is not* P. 8,9,10.
the man that hath it; nor *the things to be reaſon'd about*; nor *is it our appetites and deſires*; nor *is it authority*. What trifling this is? he ſhould have added, that it was not the Head that forms the Thoughts; nor the Fingers that write them; nor is it the Brain it ſelf; No! nor is my Reaſon, the reaſon of another Man. Our Readers are like to be much the wiſer for this.

After this he proceedeth to ſhew what P. 11.
it is, in his ſecond Chapter; the whole ſubſtance of which in other words is only this; that it is not *Simplex Apprehenſio*, nor *Judicium*, but that it is *Diſcurſus* that is properly call'd Reaſon: Which laſt he will not expreſs by *Syllogiſm*, the word for it that is commonly receiv'd: but he muſt call it, *The application of intermediate* P. 13.
Idea's to other Idea's that are diſtant from one another, and ly too far aſunder in the mind. And this he explains by *the meaſuring of two Houſes with a line*; becauſe you can't take one Houſe in one hand, and the other in another, and ſo clap them together, to find out which is higheſt. What is this but making a Syllogiſm, by apply-

ing

ing the *Medius Terminus* to the parts of the Question? and to what purpose is all this, unless he thinks that his Readers have not learned Logick?

Yes, he hath a drift in it, which is very observable in all our modern Writers against reveal'd Religion; for unless he first lays down false rules of reasoning, the consequences he wou'd make, will not appear to be true. Thô he's in the right of it thus far, and it is no more than what is in every common Logick; Yet what follows is his own, and is both trifling and false.

P. 18. For first, his four ways of coming to the knowledge of any thing, are very ill put together, and the distinction frivolous. *The Experience of the Sences, the Experience of the Mind* (i. e.) in usual speaking, Sense and Reason; *Human and Divine Revelation.* Now at first sight who does not see, that any revelation by God or Man, must enter into the mind by one of these two ways, either by our Senses
P. 17. or our Reason; so that there are but these two ways still.

And

And then as to his making *Authority a means only of Information, and* * *Evidence the only ground of Perſwaſion*; which is the fundamental Error of his Book, and indeed of all theſe modern Writers who make ſuch a ſtir about Reaſon and Evidence; we ſhall ſee the falſity of it if we conſider *Authority* in reſpect of the Perſon who is inform'd, and of him who gives the Information. P. 16,

1. In reſpect of the Perſon who is inform'd, I grant it is a means of Information; for how comes any one to the knowledge of a thing he was wholly ignorant of before, and which he could not attain of himſelf? why, by another's revealing it to him.

2. When conſidered in the Informer, it is a ground of Perſwaſion; for why do

* To make what is to be ſaid upon this head more intelligible, the Reader may take notice that by Evidence he means nothing more than the knowledge of a thing in the Mind. So that theſe two Expreſſions are the ſame. *Evidence is the only ground of Perſwaſion*, and, *You can give your aſſent to nothing but what you know*. All the difference is, that one is plain, and the other affectedly obſcure. But I muſt uſe his own Cant, otherwiſe though I ſpeak ever ſo much to the purpoſe, he will not think himſelf anſwer'd.

I give my aſſent to any Propoſition related to me from another? becauſe of the veracity and ability of the Perſon that makes the Information.

But this cunning man will ask, How can that which is inſeparable from another be the ground of any aſſent in my mind? I Anſwer, It is the opinion that is in me of his ability and veracity is the cauſe of my aſſent. The ground of this opinion indeed is Evidence: But then this Evidence is a ground of perſwaſion in reſpect of the worth of the Perſon only; and that Worth or Authority of his, is the only ground of perſwaſion in reſpect of the ſubſtance of what he relates to me. From whence it is plain, that though we grant that Evidence in the Mind is a ground of perſwaſion, yet it is not the only ground. And therefore to make this very clear and undeniable, let us take an inſtance of two Propoſitions, wherein theſe two grounds may be conſider'd ſeparately.

The three angles of a Triangle are equal to two right ones.

In a Perſon who is able to demonſtrate this Propoſition the only ground of his perſwaſion

perſwaſion or aſſent, is the evidence of it in the Mind: For the reaſon why he gives his aſſent to it is, becauſe he finds out the agreement of the extreams by intermediate Idea's, and thus as he ſpeaks, the demonſtration at laſt becomes ſelf evident.

But as to the ſubſtance of this Propoſition.

When Chriſt appears we ſhall be like him.

The authority of the Perſon relating it, is the only ground of perſwaſion. For as I ſhould never have known this if it had not been reveal'd, and therefore in this reſpect Authority is a means of information; ſo I ſhould never have believed it, if I had not known that this Revelation had come from God. And therefore *Authority* conſider'd in the Revealer, is the only ground of my aſſent to the ſubſtance of this Propoſition.

But to make this plainer, we muſt conſider that all natural Truths which do not neceſſarily require Revelation, need no other ground of perſwaſion but *Evidence*; but thoſe which do, have both theſe grounds of perſwaſion, *Evidence* and *Au-*

thority; as will appear if we distinguish the three things in every relation.

1. The meaning of the words.

2. The relation it self, or the very act of revelation.

3. The * substance of the thing intended by the Revelation.

As to the meaning of the words, and truth of the revelation in any proposition, Evidence is the ground of perswasion: for why do I believe this Proposition? *When Christ appears we shall be like him.* Because I know the meaning of the words; and because there is an evidence in my Mind of its coming from God, from those proofs to my Senses and Reason, which argue the Divine Mission of the Person who relates it; and consequently the Divinity of the relation it self. But as to the *Substance* of that Proposition, *Authority* is the only ground of Perswasion, as indeed it is in all relations whatsoever.

* To prevent all ambiguity, I do not take the word *Substance* here strictly, as it is oppos'd to the modes and accidents of the thing, but as it includes them.

And therefore 'tis now plain how *Divine* and *Humane Authority* differ as well in degrees of *Perſpicuity* as of *Certitude*. And why? becauſe when a meer man relates any thing to me, though I allow the veracity of the man, yet it is impoſſible for him to give ſuch proof to my Senſes and my Reaſon of the reality and ſubſtance of what he relates, as God can; And therefore cannot raiſe ſo great a degree of Evidence in my Mind. Though I ſuppoſe this mans relation to be true (ſo that this relation of his, and one of God's ſhall be upon equal Terms as to certitude, being both alike true) yet this aſſent of mine to what the man relates, is more precarious and worſe founded than my faith of any divine propoſition; becauſe this is more clear and diſtinct, as having a degree of Evidence in the mind which the other wants*. P. 43. & 128.

I ſhall make this plain by an inſtance. A man tells me that *Rome* is ſwallow'd up by an Earthquake; I have ſuch an opinion of the veracity of the Man, that I give my aſſent to it and believe it firmly.

* That which may make this Paragraph obſcure, is the miſtaking *Evidence* in the Mind, or *Knowledge*, for thoſe proofs which are only the cauſe of it.

Let us ſuppoſe afterwards that God reveals this ſame to me. As yet there is the ſame degree of perſpicuity allowing the ability and veracity of the man; for then both God and he tell truth in this. But if God confirm the relation by a Miracle, this ſhall raiſe an Evidence or degree of knowledge in my Mind, beyond any thing the man is able to effect; and conſequently the revelation of the ſame thing from God makes it clearer, and gives it a greater degree of perſpicuity than it had before.

But it will be yet more clear, That *Authority* is a ground of Perſwaſion, if we conſider, that all Evidence in the Mind proceeds from Evidence in the Thing. Now all Truths in themſelves are equally evident; but in reſpect of us they are not ſo: for ſome we are capable of knowing diſtinctly, and ſome we are not, becauſe they are not ſuited to our preſent capacities. In reſpect of thoſe divine truths, or of that part of them which is ſuited to our preſent capacities, *Evidence* is the ground of perſwaſion; but in reſpect of that part of it, which is not ſuited to our Capacities, as we have ſeen, *Authority*, is.

And

And thus we ſee, how we may give our aſſent, to many propoſitions, for the ſubſtance of which we have no Evidence in the mind. Why then ſays he a man ſhall believe what he doth not know, and that is giving his aſſent to nothing. But this is a quibble and to remove it effectually, let us take up the ſame propoſitions again.

The three angels of a Triangle are equal to two right ones.

'Tis plain a man who knows what a Triangle is, and what it is for one Angle to be equal to another, may give his aſſent to this propoſition; though perhaps it may be utterly impoſſible ever to beat the demonſtration into his head. And though he doth not comprehend it, yet he cannot be ſaid to be ignorant of it. And the only ground of his aſſent is, the Authority of ſome perſon who is able to demonſtrate it.

And thus it is with a Divine propoſition. *When Chriſt appears we ſhall be like him.* Any one who knows what it is for a body to be rais'd, and for one thing to be like another, may give his

aſſent to this propoſition; though it be impoſſible for him to know wherein this likeneſs will conſiſt, or to demonſtrate that it will certainly be ſo. And therefore the Authority of God is the only grounds of perſwaſion in this propoſition; and no Evidence is neceſſary any farther than to underſtand the meaning of the words, and the truth of the revelation it ſelf. So groundleſs is that main principle of his, that a man can give his aſſent to nothing but what he comprehends: whereas the contrary is as clear as the light, from what hath been ſaid.

But farther, from this ſuppoſition of his, that *Authority is only a means of Information*, and *Evidence the only ground of Perſwaſion*, theſe two abſurdities will directly follow.

1. That a man can never be deceived in any thing; for if *Evidence* in the Mind be the only ground of Perſwaſion, a man can never give his aſſent but where there is this Evidence; for if there be but one only cauſe, the effect can never proceed but from that cauſe; and what is evident, that is what is truly known, can never deceive.

He

He hath no way of evading this, but by ſaying that the cauſe of error is the giving aſſent where there is none, or not ſufficient Evidence in the Mind; which deſtroys every thing he ſays upon this head; for this ſuppoſes that there may be ſome other cauſe of aſſent beſides Evidence. But if we ſuppoſe Evidence to be the only cauſe of aſſent, then it muſt vary in degrees together with it's cauſe; ſo that a clear Evidence ſhall have a firm aſſent, and the leaſt degree of Evidence ſhall have but the leaſt degree of aſſent; ſo that ſtill a man can never be deceiv'd in any thing, or in any degree. And for him to ſay that we may think we have this Evidence when we have it not, is ſtill ſuppoſing that there is ſome other ground of aſſent. Nay worſe, 'tis ſuppoſing that a thing may be Evident to us, aud not Evident at the ſame time.

2. It will follow that no Perſon either God or Man, can be believ'd on their word. For what they relate is evident to the Mind, or it is not; If it be, then they give their aſſent to that *Evidence*, and not to the Perſon who relates it. If it be not evident (i. e.) according to him, if he doth not know it perfectly, he

he muſt utterly reject it. And thus in a few words he deſtroys all Faith, both Humane and Divine. For thus he proceeds; a Man can believe nothing but what he knows; and he knows nothing but what he comprehends; and then he is ſaid to comprehend a thing when he hath a clear and diſtinct Idea of it, (i. e.) when it is as clear as a Mathematical Demonſtration; or as evident as what he ſees with his Eyes, for you know ſeeing is believing all the world over.

Having thus made it plain that *Evidence* is not the only ground of Perſwaſion, I come now to conſider his *clear and diſtinct Idea's* which he lays down as the ground of this Evidence. This opinion carries a face of fairneſs and probability, and inſinuates it ſelf by the common inclinations of men, who are naturally averſe to all reſtraint in thinking as well as acting, and are as uneaſie at any fetters upon their Mind as upon their Body. They wou'd not willingly be oblig'd to give their aſſent to any thing but what they have clear and diſtinct Idea's of; and if it be not thus in the Chriſtian Religion, even well meaning people are apt to wiſh it were ſo.

Now

Now becauſe I deſign this Letter in anſwer not only to this Book, but to all the oppoſers of *Revelation* and *Myſteries*, upon the like principles of ſetting up for *Reaſon* and *Evidence*, and clear and diſtinct notions of every thing they give their aſſent to, I ſhall be very particular in the conſideration of this point. And I hope to make out plainly to them, the deep deceit that lies at the bottom of all this; and to convince them that God, by requiring their aſſent to his Revelations, doth as little violence to their mind as to their body; and that he leaves their Reaſon as full a ſcope, and as great a liberty in matters of Religion as in any thing elſe. So that they will find us as great Sticklers for *clear Idea's*, ſtrict *Reaſon*, and *Evidence* as they can be for their hearts.

Theſe Men ſpeak much truth, but make falſe inferences, never conſidering the difference between theſe two propoſitions, but confounding them in all their diſcourſes.

Clear and diſtinct Idea's are the foundation of all our knowledge and aſſent, which conſider'd in a right ſenſe is undoubtedly true.

true. But for that other which they make a conſequence of it, it is abſolutely falſe, *viz.*

That we can believe nothing but what we have a clear and diſtinct Idea of. For the clear conceptions we have of ſome things, give us a confus'd and imperfect knowledge of others; and it is upon the account of thoſe things whereof we have clear and diſtinct Idea's, that we give a firm aſſent to the exiſtence of things whereof we have no Idea at all. So that theſe two ſayings widely differ; as much as truth from falſehood.

I can give no aſſent without clear and diſtinct Idea's. And,

I muſt have a clear and diſtinct Idea of every thing I give my aſſent to.

Now becauſe this is the fundamental error of all our quaint Reaſoners againſt *Revelation*, and the fallacy whereby they impoſe upon others, I ſhall expreſs my ſelf as diſtinctly and plainly in this matter as I can.

But by the way we muſt obſerve that ſince it appears undeniably from what hath been ſaid, that Evidence is not the only ground of Perſwaſion, it is a direct and

and immediate conſequence from thence; that there is no neceſſity of having a clear and diſtinct Idea of what I give my aſſent to. Not but that I allow there is a neceſſity of clear and diſtinct Idea's of ſome things, to make us give our aſſent to others; And therefore though Authority be a ground of Perſwaſion, yet what this Man wou'd inſinuate doth not follow, *viz.* That *therefore all its Relations, or any of them are to be receiv'd without Examen.* For all the Revelations of God admit of the ſtrict'ſt enquiry, and ſevereſt ſearch of our reaſon: and it is this that enables us to diſtinguiſh them from the wild extravagancies of Enthuſiaſts, and the deluſions of the Devil. It is by the help of this that I now ſhew the difference between his fallacies and the truth of God. And in order to ſet them both in a clear light, I ſhall fix the ſignification of this moſt ambiguous word, which he hath compell'd me to make ſo much uſe of, for otherwiſe we ſhall but grope for truth in the dark.

What is meant by an *Adæquate Idea* is ſure and fixt, (i. e.) a full and comprehenſive knowledge of any thing, ſo as to know all that is knowable in it. But how far ſhort, what Men call a clear and diſtinct

ſtinct Idea comes of that adæquate conception of a thing, is impoſſible to determine, becauſe our knowledge of things is varied almoſt in infinite degrees; inſomuch that perhaps we have not Idea's of any two things in nature, that are equally clear and diſtinct. And therefore to cut off all Metaphyſical niceties, and inſiſt upon nothing but genuine Reaſon; by a clear and diſtinct Idea, as it relates to this controverſie is ſignified, *as clear and diſtinct a conception as we ordinarily have of the things of this World.* For theſe are the two main things he contends for in his whole Book.

1. *That we have as clear and diſtinct Idea's of all things reveal'd to us in the Goſpel, as we have of the ordinary Phænomena of Nature. And,*

2. *That we are oblig'd to give our aſſent to them no further than we have clear and diſtinct Idea's of them.*

In direct oppoſition to which, I ſhall lay down theſe two propoſitions.

1. *That we are ſo far from having clear and diſtinct Idea's of thoſe things of another World*

World which are revealed to us, that we have no proper or immediate Idea at all of them. And,

2. *That though we have no proper or immediate Idea of those things, yet we are bound to believe them; and that our assent to them, according to his own principle, is founded upon clear and distinct Idea's.*

1. As to the first, by a *proper and immediate Idea* I mean, *a conception or notion of the thing as it is in it self.* By *a mediate or improper Idea* I mean, *a notion we form of any thing in our Minds by Analogy or* * *Similitude.* Whether this distinction hath been made use of or no I know not; but sure I am 'tis a very necessary one, and of excellent use to set the bounds and measures of our knowledge, and to lay open the true nature of our Christian Faith: that we may clearly apprehend where *Knowledge* ends, and *Faith* proceeds alone.

* Not that worldly Objects can have any real likeness or resemblance of the things reveal'd, but they are such as God hath made choice of for that purpose; and therefore we may make this inference from his Wisdom, that they bear the greatest analogy with them, of any things that fall within the compass of our knowledge now.

And

And I am perſwaded a due obſervation of this diſtinction, wou'd effectually put an end to all this controverſie about myſteries.

Now what I ſay is this, that we have no proper Idea's of the things of another World, but frame to our ſelves conceptions of them, from thoſe things in this World whereof we have clear and diſtinct Idea's. And to make this appear, let us conſider that there are but two ways of God's revealing any thing to us; either by giving us new faculties, or by adapting his Revelations to thoſe we have, which are our *Senſes* and our *Reaſon*. He grants that it is not by giving us any new faculties; and therefore ſince this is done by adapting himſelf to thoſe faculties we already have, then 'tis plain that he muſt make uſe of ſuch words and notions as fall within their proper ſphere.

Now that we can have no proper or immediate Idea from Senſe or Reaſon, of the real nature of any thing relating to another life, as it is in it ſelf; or indeed any other notion of them than that of *Being* in general, will beſt appear by inſtancing in the particulars. I ſhall begin with God himſelf and his Attributes, that incompre-

incomprehenſible Being which this bold Man affirms, to have nothing more myſterious in it than a *ſtock* or a *ſtone*.

1. And firſt our imagination can frame no likeneſs or reſemblance of God, as it can do of material and ſenſible Objects; and therefore the Iſraelites were forbid to repreſent him by any figure or reſemblance, becauſe they ſaw no ſimilitude. And to the ſame purpoſe are many expreſſions in the Scriptures as Iſai. 40. 18. *To whom then will you liken God? or what likeneſs will you compare unto him?* So that I hope I have gain'd thus much, that God is more myſterious than a ſtock or a ſtone, becauſe we can frame ſome imagination of theſe, but none at all of him.

2. But, as we can form no ſimilitude from the *Senſes*, ſo neither hath the *Reaſon* any the leaſt glimps of his real Nature as he is in himſelf, for the only way we have of forming an Idea of him is either negatively, by removing from him all the Imperfections of the Creatures, or by enlarging thoſe excellencies we find in theſe, and attributing them to God. So that he is now incomprehenſible to us, not only as we have no clear and diſtinct

knowledge of him, but as we have no proper Idea at all of his real nature. And therefore when he made a particular Revelation of himself it was only by the name I AM, which denoted nothing more of him than barely his Existence; and plainly intimated that it was impossible for them to conceive any thing farther of him. For this reason 'tis said that hereafter *we shall see him as he is*, because we have no knowledge of him now, but by mediation of those Idea's we have of the things of this World. And to make this farther appear let us consider him in those Attributes of his, whereof we are thought to have the most clear and distinct Idea's; And,

1. 'Tis reveal'd to us that *God is a Spirit*, by which we really understand nothing more, than that he is a Being that is not matter; which is so far from a proper immediate Idea, that it is not a positive one; for all the notion we have of a Spirit is that it thinks, and that it moves. As to the first of these, the only reason why we attribute it to a Spirit, is because we can demonstrate that meer matter cannot think; And therefore we conclude it must be something else that can,

can, though we have no notion at all of what it is. Beſides we can't conceive what thinking is in a pure Spirit; we know nothing of the true manner of that operation in them, which is anſwerable to knowledge in us. We can conceive thinking now, only as it is perform'd by help of material Organs, and more immediately by the Fibres of the Brain. But when we ſet our ſelves to conſider it abſtractedly from theſe, we have no Idea at all of it. So that we now form as groſs a notion of thinking in a pure Spirit, as we do of its motion, when we walk by dragging one Leg after another.

And then as to its motion, when we ſay a Spirit moves, we don't make this inference from any knowledge we have of the true nature of it, but becauſe we can prove that matter can't move it ſelf, and thus by denying it to matter, we really do nothing more than give it to ſomething elſe; but what that ſomething is we know not. For we know not how it moves, or how it communicates this motion to matter. Nor indeed can we diſtinguiſh Thought and Motion in a Spirit; and as far as we may make a conjecture of what we have no Idea of, in all likely-hood they are the ſame. And there-

Lock of Hum. Under. *B.* II. *C.* 23.

fore I can't but wonder that any one ſhou'd affirm, that we have as clear and diſtinct an Idea of Spirit as of Body. That we have as good proof for it's exiſtence, as we have for that of matter I grant; but to ſay our Idea's of their Modes and Properties are equally clear and diſtinct, appears to be a very groundleſs aſſertion.

2. As for *Infinity* another Attribute of God, the only way we are ſaid to form a notion of this, is by continu'd accumulation, and then a confus'd Idea of what remains when we are weary of this. But 'tis plain there is not one addition we make but *ipſo facto* we deſtroy it's being; the very thought of addition, does of all things in the World carry the Mind fartheſt from the real nature of it. And how little this will help us to any immediate poſitive Idea of it is plain, becauſe that when we have imagin'd all the Atoms that go to the compoſition of the Univerſe, told as many times over as we can heap up numbers for it, we are as far from any true Idea of Infinity, as when we began to reckon *Two*. Had I ſaid *One*, we ſhou'd in all likely-hood have been nearer it; as an inſtant of time hath been found a better repreſentation of Eternity, than

than the ſucceſſions of numberleſs Ages. And therefore it were more conducive to true knowledge, to own our ignorance, and ſay it is a perfection which we know nothing of, but we form a groſs, a ſcanty notion of it by perpetual addition to the wideſt ſpace, or greateſt number, or longeſt duration we can think of. Lock of Hum. Underſt.

3. As to his *Omnipreſence* we have no Idea at all of it, for it is utterly impoſſible for us to conceive how the ſame thing ſhou'd be here, and there, and every where in the ſame inſtant: and therefore we frame to our ſelves a groſs notion of it by that of continued extenſion; though at the ſame time we are ſure this muſt be utterly inconſiſtent with the real Nature of God.

4. And as for the *Preſcience of God*, we are ſo far from having any notion of it, that it cannot enter into our heads to think how God ſhou'd actually ſee a thing that hath no being: for God ſees things to come, as we ſee what is now. So that we can no more conceive it, than we can conceive how a thing may be, and not be at the ſame time; and therefore we frame to our ſelves the beſt Idea we

can of it (i. e.) from those previous Idea's of things in our Mind; which doth not at all represent this Attribute of Prescience as it is in God, who sees them actually and *ex parte rei*. Nor can we conceive how this Prescience of his is reconcileable with the contingency of things, though we are sure it is so, from those Prophecies of very minute circumstances, many hundreds of years before they came to pass.

I might thus run through all the Attributes of God, and shew in every one of them, how we make to our selves some representations of them, by compounding and enlarging those Idea's we have either of sensible Objects, or of the operations of our own Minds. And thus we represent the *Wisdom*, and *Power*, and *Justice*, and *Holiness*, and *Mercy*, &c. of God, from the scanty notions we have of these things in our selves, though they exhibit to us no more of the real nature of these things as they are in God, than continu'd extension doth of his Omnipresence; or a great number doth of his Infinity; or many ages of his Eternity. So that in all our thoughts of that divine Being we don't proceed thus. The nature of God is such, therefore these things follow. But these things are the greatest perfections

we

we are able to conceive, and therefore by help of theſe we form the beſt and moſt honourable Idea of God, that is poſſible for us in this condition of infirmity and blindneſs that we are now in. Not but that after we have fram'd the biggeſt Idea of God our Minds are capable of, by the greateſt enlargement of theſe perfections, after all, 'tis as groſs a repreſentation of him as Darkneſs is of Light: and expreſſeth nothing of the real nature of that incomprehenſible Being to us, nor do they give us the leaſt glimps of him as he is in himſelf.

2. But Secondly, As we can have no ſuch proper and immediate Idea of God himſelf, ſo neither have we ſuch Idea's of any thing relating to another World. And therefore it is that the Glory of Heaven is reveal'd to us under the notion of Light; the greatneſs and ſplendour of that place, by that of a Kingdom; and the joys of Heaven by ſenſual pleaſures, ſuch as *Eating* and *Drinking*; the operation of Grace, by the nouriſhment of our Bodies, *&c.* and when God himſelf is ſpoke of, 'tis always by analogy with the Members of a Human Body, and the operations of our Minds. Thus he is men-

tion'd as having Hands and Feet, as Seeing, and Hearing, and as being affected with all the paſſions of a Human Soul; becauſe he hath no other way to ſpeak of himſelf to us now, ſince we have neither Words nor Idea's, to think or ſpeak of him after any other manner; or indeed of any other Objects of another World.

And therefore it is that the Spirit of God in all his Revelations, hath made uſe, not only of the *Words* and *Phraſes* commonly receiv'd and underſtood; but likewiſe of thoſe *common notions* in the minds of Men, of things in this World, to repreſent Truths, which are in reſpect of us now unconceivable; and for which there are as yet no capacities in our nature. So that in truth all the Idea's we at preſent have of the things of another World, are no other than a ſort of *Types* and *Figures* of things, the real nature of which is totally obſcur'd from us.

1. Cor. 13. 12. And this is the literal meaning of thoſe words of St. Paul, *That now we ſee through a Glaſs darkly*, (i. e.) by analogy only with the things of this World. But *then Face to Face* (i. e.) we ſhall have as immediate a view of thoſe heavenly Objects, as we have now of theſe things which only

ly repreſent them to us. So that when we are ſaid to have theſe divine Truths reveal'd to us in *part*, the meaning is not, that any real part of the thing as it is in it ſelf is exhibited to our view, and the reſt obſcur'd; or that we have any indiſtinct view of the thing it ſelf, as we ſee an Object at a great diſtance. But the meaning is, that the *whole* is reveal'd to us under the reſemblance of ſome things in this World, whereof we have clear and diſtinct Idea's.

And thus it is plain that though we may be ſaid to have *Idea's* of God and Divine things, yet they are not *immediate or proper* ones, but a ſort of compoſition we make up from our Idea's of Worldly Objects; which at the utmoſt amounts to no more than a *Type* or *Figure*, by which ſomething in another World is ſignified, of which we have no more notion than a Blind-man hath of *Light*. And now that I am fallen into this Metaphor, which ſeems well to explain the nature of the thing, let us purſue it a little; and ſuppoſe, that to a Man who had never ſeen or heard any thing of it, it were to be reveal'd that there was ſuch a thing as *Light*. This man as yet hath neither a *name* nor a *notion* for it, nor any capacity

of

of conceiving what it is in it ſelf. Tis plain therefore God wou'd not reveal this to him by the name of Light, a word wholly unknown to him; nor by ſtamping on his Mind any immediate Idea of the thing it ſelf: for then it were utterly impoſſible for him to communicate this Revelation to others as blind as himſelf; for nothing but the ſame Almighty impreſſion cou'd do that. So that this Revelation muſt be made by Words and Notions which are already in him. And accordingly when he is told, that it is a thing which can diffuſe it ſelf in an inſtant many thouſands of miles round; and enable him to know in a moment what order all things lay at a great diſtance from him, and what proportion they bore one to another; nay that it cou'd make him know where the Heavens lay; and by the help of this he ſhou'd there diſcern at once, a vaſt and almoſt infinite number of very pleaſant Bodies; and in ſhort that without the help of his *Stick* or his *Hand* he ſhou'd know every thing that lay before him. After all, 'tis plain this Man wou'd form to himſelf an Idea of *Light* from his *Touch*, he wou'd think it very like *feeling*, and perhaps call it by that name; becauſe this was the beſt way he had

had of diſtinguiſhing one thing from another: and therefore wou'd conclude that thoſe *Bodies* he heard of, muſt needs be wondrous ſoft and ſmooth.

Juſt thus do we conceive the things of another World, ſo that we may rack our invention, and turn and wind all thoſe Idea's we have into ten thouſand different ſhapes, and yet never make up any *likeneſs* or *ſimilitude*, of the real Nature of thoſe Objects of another World.

And now I hope, he will grant it a thing poſſible for God to make ſuch a Revelation as this to a Blind Man. And yet by this conceſſion he deſtroys his whole Book. For upon his Principles it were a thing utterly impoſſible for any Man that was born Blind, to believe there is ſuch a thing as *Light*, upon the teſtimony either of *God* or *Man*. For without the uſe of *one* of his *Eyes* at leaſt, he's ſo far from having any clear and diſtinct Idea of it, that he cou'd have no Idea at all of it as it is in it ſelf; and therefore muſt never believe that there is ſuch a thing. Now it were a very pretty way of revealing the nature of *Light* to this Man, by opening of his Eyes. Then I muſt confeſs

ſeſs *Light* wou'd be no longer a Myſtery to him. And when this Man makes us underſtand (as he hath undertaken) the nature of God, and the things of another World, as perfectly as that Man doth the nature of *Light* when his Eyes are open'd, I will yield. But till then, I muſt freely own ours to be the caſe of that Blind Man, in reſpect of all the Myſteries of our Religion: and before this *wonderful* Book of his comes out, I am very poſitive that nothing leſs than the Almighty Power of God is able to perform what he promiſes, ſince it requires the alteration of our whole Nature, and the enlargement of all our Faculties.

But perhaps he will object here, If it be a thing thus impoſſible for us to have any proper Idea's of theſe things of another World, what neceſſity was there for any *revelation* at all of them? wou'd not the immediate Objects of Senſe and Reaſon have done ſo well, without farther reference to any thing beyond them? I Anſwer, no. For the diſcovery of the things of another World even thus far, is abſolutely neceſſary to make Men good and vertuous. Though we had ever ſo great a conviction of the innate excellency of

Vertue

Vertue it ſelf, yet this wou'd bind us but like a Spider's Webb. We might perhaps have admir'd it for it's delicate and excellent contexture, but it wou'd have been of no ſtrength, to reſtrain the unruly inclinations of our Nature. The excellencies of Vertue, without theſe Revelations, had been a ſort of Bonds and Fetters which wou'd have ſat as looſe upon us as the Air; they wou'd have ſerv'd at beſt only to have rais'd our admiration, but never to have influenc'd our practice. And therefore ſince they were thus neceſſary, and that we are not capable of any knowledge of them by *direct* and *immediate intuition*, there was no other way of revealing them to us, but by *analogy* with the things of this World. And this Imperfect way of Revelation is ſufficient to anſwer all the ends of God, ſince it is abundantly enough to all the purpoſes of Vertue and Holineſs: as the motions of the heavenly Bodies repreſented in a *Sphere*, is ſufficient to anſwer all the ends of humane life, though the *Hypotheſis* be all very different from it, and repreſents nothing leſs to us, than the reality of the thing.

It being, as I hope by this time very plain, that we have no ſuch proper or immediate

mediate Idea's, either of God or the things of another World, as of the things in this; we may from hence see the specious trifling of those abstracted *Metaphysical* Brains, who bend their endeavours to bring down these hidden things to the level of our present capacities of knowledge: whereas the finding out a way of commerce with the Moon, or how to make a visit to the fixt Stars, is a grave and serious thought to it.

The other Proposition I laid down in direct opposition to him was,

"2. *That though we have no proper or immediate Idea's of these things, yet that we are bound to believe them.* And, *That our belief of them is founded upon clear and distinct Idea's.* Not of themselves, but of those things by which they are represented to us, and because of those proofs we have from thence of their existence to our Senses and our Reason.

And here we are to observe what I made out before, *viz.* That in every Mystery there are two things to be consider'd. 1. *Something that we do comprehend fully,* and Secondly, *Something that we have no*

notion at all of. As to this latter part of it, it is wholly exempted from the diſquiſition of Reaſon, and Faith alone can reach it, for our Reaſon fails us where we have no Idea's. So that in reſpect of this part of the Myſtery, theſe and ſuch like expreſſions of his are very true, *viz.*

That the intermediate Idea can be no proof, where the agreement with both Idea's of the queſtion is not evident. P. 14. And again,

That when we have no Notions or Ideas of a thing we cannot Reaſon about it at all. For, as I have ſhewn, we have no proper immediate Idea's of the things revealed to us in the Goſpel; and therefore we can't ſpeak one word of ſenſe about the real nature of them, as they are in themſelves.

All beyond this World, as yet, is but a *dark* and *empty Void* to us; and we may ſend out our Reaſon to range it backward and forward inceſſantly, till Soul and Body part, and never diſcover the leaſt glimps of light, into the true nature of any thing beyond this ſcanty *Sphere* of ours. We have no *intermediate Idea's* to make Inferences concerning them, and if we had, there cou'd be no application of them to things whereof we have no notion.

tion. So that thus far every thing of another World is a Myſtery to us, and a *new born Infant* knows as much of them, bating their *exiſtence only*, as the learnedſt man in the world.

Bt as to that other part of them which is knowable by us (*i. e.*) as far as we are able to conceive theſe divine things, by *analogy* with the things of this World, either under the *ſimilitude of ſenſible Objects*, or *the Operations of our own Mind*, they fall entirely under the conſideration of our Reaſon. Thus far we have as clear and diſtinct Ideas of them, as we have of other ordinary worldly Objects. And in reſpect of this part of our *Chriſtian Myſteries*, all theſe ſayings of his are very true, *viz.*

That nothing reveal'd is more exempted from the diſquiſitions of Reaſon, than the ordinary Phænomena of Nature. And,

That nothing in the Goſpel is contrary to Reaſon, or above it.

For all the Revelations of God are in a way ſuitable to thoſe powers of knowledge we have, and he requires us to believe nothing, but what is juſt and reaſonable.

For

For as he ſays, *To act tyrannically does only become the Devil.* In reſpect of this part of the Myſtery, all that he contends for holds true. We muſt have *clear and diſtinct Idea's* of the things; we muſt have *intermediate Idea's to find out the agreement between the Extremes.* What need I inſtance in any more particulars? I allow him thus far, all the *Clearneſs, Perſpicuity, Evidence* and *Reaſon* any man can wiſh for. And all the requeſt I would make to theſe Men of Reaſon is, That they wou'd ceaſe to ask for a *rational account*, of what neither they nor we can have any *notion* of; and that as to every thing elſe in Religion they wou'd be as *exact*, and *critical*, and ſevere in their Reaſonings as poſſible they can. And unleſs they find more reaſon to believe the truth of thoſe things reveal'd in the Goſpel, than it is poſſible for them to have for what any Man ſays, then I will allow them to be the only Men of *Senſe*, and that we are only *ſoft* and *credulous* fools.

'Tis every mans *native Right* and *Privilege* to judge and examine every thing, before he gives his aſſent to it; and 'tis this alone which diſtinguiſheth our *Chriſtian Faith* from *blind Credulity*, becauſe it admits of ſuch enquiry. For though we

have no *notion* of the things themselves, yet we are sufficiently assur'd of the truth of them, from those things we fully understand: And the constant method of arguing in divine things is this; from the things whereof we have *clear* and *distinct Idea's*, we infer the existence of those things whereof we have *no Idea* at all. As for instance in this Proposition.

This Corruptible shall put on Incorruption.

I have a clear and distinct Idea of what it is for a Body to *corrupt* and *rot*; and likewise I know what an athletick habit of body is, and for a person to have a firm constitution, and to remain always in the utmost *beauty* and *vigour* of a blooming Youth, which is the best Idea of Incorruption that I can frame to my self now. And the reason I give my assent to this Proposition, is not because I have any the least notion of that *immutable state of Perfection* which a Body shall be rais'd to, and which is here represented under the notion of *Incorruption*: But because I have sufficient proof for the truth of it, in this Type or Figure by which it is represented to me, that it is possible for me to have, (*i. e.*) the

(*i. e.*) the concurring teſtimonies of *Prophecies*, *Miracles*, and the *Excellency of that Doctrine* which they preach'd, who were made the inſtruments of revealing this to me.

And thus likewiſe, though we have no Idea of God as he is in himſelf, yet we infer his *Exiſtence* from thoſe clear and diſtinct Ideas we have of the things of Nature; which is the very meaning of the *Apoſtle* when he ſays, *All that was to be known of God was manifeſted in them, for the inviſible things of him from the creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made.* Rom. I. 19. It was for want of ſome Idea of him as he is, that made the Heathen World run into *Idolatry*, and repreſent him under the ſimilitude of ſome of the *meaneſt of his Creatures.* And now by Revelation, what we come to know more of him is, that we can have no Idea at all of him as he is in himſelf: and as it follows it is this will one day render all *Infidels without excuſe*, becauſe though they had no clear and diſtinct Ideas of the things of another World, yet God did not leave them without ſufficient proof of their exiſtence; nay greater than it was poſſible for them to have of any thing elſe.

From whence we ſee, that there is an *eſſential* difference between *Human* and *Divine Faith*, becauſe the proof on which one is grounded is *fallible*, and that of the other *infallible*; and conſequently a greater degree of knowledge in the one than in the other. This is one reaſon of uſing theſe two words *Faith* and *Knowledge* ſo promiſcuouſly in ſome places of the New Teſtament, becauſe our belief of a meer man, is but a precarious aſſent, but the *Chriſtian Faith* may be called *Knowledge* in a mere peculiar ſence, becauſe we are obliged to believe nothing, but what we have infallible proof for. Which again ſhews the falſity of that ſaying of his, which he lays ſuch a ſtreſs upon. That *Divine and Humane Revelations do not differ in degrees of perſpicuity.* For where there is a greater degree of *Knowledge*, there is a greater degree of *Perſpicuity*, but in the Chriſtian Faith there is a greater degree of *Knowledge*, *Ergo.*

And now we ſee plainly the error of thoſe men, who out of a *miſtaken zeal* for the *Myſteries* of Chriſtianity, have ſet themſelves to defend them, by bringing them down to the *level* of a man: and endeavour by *thin ſpun notions*, to ſolve the greateſt difficulties in them upon the Principles

Principles of Reaſon. Theſe are very raſh and inconſiderate attempts; and when all is done, their failing in what they aim at, is the beſt defence of our Chriſtian Myſteries. If we had not a *determinate ſenſe* for the words wherein they are reveal'd, they could be no *Articles* of Faith. And if they cou'd be fully ſolv'd and explain'd, they wou'd ceaſe to be *Myſteries*. This hath given the Enemies of our Religion a great advantage, for when they find they are not to be throughly accounted for (as indeed they are not) upon the ſtrength of Reaſon, together with the aſſiſtance of that degree of *Revelation* we now have, they utterly reject them, as *inconſiſtent* with thoſe powers of knowledge which God hath given us. Never diſtinguiſhing between that part of a Myſtery, which we underſtand clearly and diſtinctly, and will admit of the ſtricteſt enquiry of the *moroſeſt Reaſoner*; and the *ſubſtance* of the thing ſignified by it, whereof we have no Idea at all, and therefore nothing can be more abſurd than to raiſe any Diſputes about it.

It wou'd certainly be very pleaſant, to hear two ſuch *quickſighted* blind men as I ſpoke of, diſpute warmly concerning the nature of *Light*, and how many *ſeem-*

ing contradictions they wou'd start concerning it, as, *How any thing cou'd be in every point of such a vast Space in the same instant? How it was possible for them to touch so many millions of Objects at once?* Since this was their chief way of distinguishing one thing from another, &c. and fall out about these *imaginary difficulties* irreconcileably. Whereas upon supposition, that it was reveal'd to them that there was *such a thing*; which shou'd make them very happy some time or other, when God shou'd open their eyes: Their business was not to consider, whether they were able clearly and distinctly to *comprehend* the nature of this thing; but whether it were really *reveal'd* to them, under the notion of such things whereof they had clear and Distinct Idea's. If it were divinely reveal'd, and they had sufficient testimonies for the reality and existence of it, then they wou'd have sufficient reason to believe it, without any clear and distinct Idea of the thing it self.

So that we take a wrong *method*, against all the *Opposers* of *Revelation* and *Mysteries*, when we go about to explain to them what is really inexplicable by us now; many such *prophane* and *impious*

Books

Books as theſe have been the conſequence of it. We are neither able to apprehend any thing of theſe Myſteries, nor if we knew them, cou'd we explain them ſo as to make other people underſtand us. 'Tis the greateſt *Folly*, becauſe it is *impoſſible*; and the greateſt *Boldneſs*, becauſe it is ſearching into what is hidden from us; and all theſe *elaborate Intricacies* are but miſchievous trifling. And when Men talk ſo much, of what they have *no Idea* of, it muſt always end in darkneſs and confuſion. That part of a Chriſtian Myſtery which is *intelligible* and *plain*, was ever ſo; and that part which is *myſterious*, notwithſtanding all their vain endeavours, will ever be ſo till we come to another World.

Therefore our way to deal with theſe men is, to fix the right *ſenſe* and *meaning* of thoſe Propoſitions, wherein the Myſteries of the Goſpel are reveal'd to us; and then to inſiſt upon the *Proofs* we have for the truth of the Revelation, and ſhew that they are ſuch as ought to convince any reaſonable unprejudic'd man; inſomuch that if they do not give their aſſent to them, they ſhall be *without excuſe* when they come to be try'd for their Infidelity. Thus we ſhou'd turn the *courſe* of our Thoughts into a right Chanel, and con-

found all theſe Enemies of our excellent Religion. For by freely owning (as becomes us) that we have no notion at all of theſe myſterious things as they are in themſelves, we cut off a multitude of *frivolous* and *impertinent Objections*. And ſhew theſe men, that our Chriſtian Faith however is no *lazy credulity*, or *blind implicite aſſent*, ſince it is built upon a better foundation, than is poſſibly for ane man to lay, without the concurrence of the *Almighty Power* of God: inſomuch that we are ready to join iſſue with them, upon the Principles of Reaſon, in every point of our *Chriſtian Faith*, as far as the things reveal'd fall within the compaſs of it.

And therefore were I to give a reaſon of my belief of the TRINITY, laying aſide all *affectation of hard words*, and *abſtruſe Metaphyſical Notions*, I wou'd do it thus.

I am fully perſwaded of the neceſſity of *Revelation in general*, in order to all the purpoſes of *Vertue* and *Piety* in this life; and I am convinc'd that thoſe Revelations of the things of another World, which are made in the *Goſpel*, have better proofs of their *Divinity* than any other whatſoever. They have ſuch *teſtimonies* of their coming from God, from Prophe-

Prophecies, and Miracles, and the agreeableneſs of the Doctrines therein contain'd, to our common Notions, that if I uſe my *Reaſon* with the ſame *impartiality* in theſe that I do in other things, I muſt give my aſſent to them.

In thoſe writings I find this Propoſition,

*There are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt, and theſe Three are one**. 1 Joh. 5. 7.

From

* Though we grant this Text was not quoted by the *Nicene Council* againſt the *Arrians*, and is not found in many ancient Copies. Nay though we ſhou'd grant that it was not originally in the Epiſtle of *St. John*, it is however a good Argument for the Doctrine of the *Trinity*. For,

If it was a *Marginal Note*, and ſo crept into the *Text*, this however ſhews it to have been the Opinion of the moſt Ancient and Primitive Chriſtians, who put this Comment to the Text.

If they ſay this was put in by the *Orthodox*, it was done in oppoſition to *Hereticks*, and this was a ſufficient evidence of their firm belief of the Doctrine of the *Trinity* then.

But if this Text was expung'd by the *Arrians*, who, as St. *Ambroſe* obſerves of them, were remarkable for this ſort of fraudulent dealing with the Scriptures, then there was a great deal of reaſon for reſtoring of it.

Though it be not in *ſome* Copies, yet it is in others, and thoſe very ancient. And that which may

may give us a ſtrong preſumption that it is *genuine*, is that it was quoted by St. *Cyprian* a conſiderable time before the *Nicene Council*: and before the *Arian Hereſy* ran ſo high, or that it was ſo much for the intereſt of any party either to *inſert* or *expunge* it.

But however this be, we are ſure the Scriptures with it are *all of a piece*, and very conſiſtent with themſelves. For the ſubſtance of this Text is plainly expreſt in other places, which they don't deny to be *genuine*. And we make no queſtion but if it were in the power of our modern *Hereticks* of the ſame rank, theſe too wou'd be left out of all thoſe Copies, which ſhou'd be tranſmitted to poſterity.

From whence, and from many other paſſages in the Scriptures, I find that there is a *Diſtinction* made in the *Godhead*, under theſe three names of *Father*, *Son*, and *Holy Ghoſt*, which the *Church* hath expreſt, altogether by the word *Trinity*, and ſingly by the word *Perſon*. And I think theſe terms proper enough, to expreſs all that we know of this *Myſtery*.

Now I find no account of the *Manner* and *Nature* of this *Diſtinction* in the holy *Scriptures*, any otherwiſe than that the Son was begotten, and that the Holy Ghoſt *comes* from the Father and the Son. I conclude there is ſomething more than a meer *Nominal Diſtinction*, becauſe we are ſaid to be Baptized, in the name of the *Father*, *and of the Son*, *and of the Ho-*

ly

ly Ghoſt. Which muſt needs import ſomething more than if that Commiſſion had run thus. *Go Baptize all Nations in the name of* Jehovah, *and of* Elohim, *and of Adonai.* And if there were not ſomething more intended, than barely that they ſhou'd do it in the name of God, this were a needleſs tautology.

Again, I conclude that they are not three *diſtinct different Spirits*, for then there muſt be *three Gods*, contrary to *Reaſon* and Scripture. From all which I infer, there is in the Godhead ſomething more than a *meer nominal Diſtinction*, and ſomething leſs than that of three *different Spirits.* And becauſe I find each Perſon *ſeparately* as well as *jointly* mention'd as God, and Divine Worſhip allow'd and paid to them. Therefore as that excellent *Creed* expreſſeth it, *I worſhip the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity; neither confounding the Perſons, nor dividing the Subſtance.* Athan.

Now at the ſame time I make this *profeſſion* of my *Faith*, I allow I have not the leaſt knowledge how ſtrict this *Union* is, nor how great the *Diſtinction.* It is as much beyond my *Reaſon*, as the *Glory* of God is beyond my *Sight*; and any Man who ſtrives to conceive it himſelf, or takes

takes pains to explain it to others, is guilty of ſuch a folly, that I can't think of any action in nature *extravagant* enough to match it. If we ſaw a Man ſtretching up his hand with a great deal of *Vehemence* to pull down a Star, we ſhou'd certainly conclude him diſtracted; becauſe 'tis utterly impoſſible for him to *reach* it, or *graſp* it if he cou'd. 'Tis the very caſe of thoſe Men, who go about to account for the manner of that *Unity*, and *Diſtinction* for which they have neither *Words* nor *Idea's*.

And therefore I ſay it again, in oppoſition to this Inſolent Man, that I thus *adore what I cannot comprehend*. This is one of thoſe *Myſteries* reveal'd in the Goſpel, and it is never the leſs a Myſtery for any thing he hath yet ſaid, or ever will ſay; for the Union is inexplicable, and will be ſo to the end of the World. However my aſſent to this is not *precarious* and *implicite*, or any *eaſie blind Credulity*; but is founded upon *clear* and *diſtinct Idea's*. For there are three things to be done by every reaſonable thinking Man, concerning any Propoſition wherein a *Myſtery* is reveal'd.

1. *To*

1. *To be ſure that he underſtand well the meaning of the Words.*
2. *That he diſcern no Contradiction in them.*
3. *That he hath ſufficient evidence of the Revelations coming from God.*

1. As to the firſt of theſe, in reſpect of the Myſtery I am now upon, I underſtand very well the *meaning of the Words* wherein it is reveal'd; and they themſelves who oppoſe this Doctrine underſtand them as well as I; for if they did not know what was meant by the *Words*, they wou'd never ſet themſelves to argue againſt it; for there is no other way of confuting *Nonſenſe*, but ſaying it is ſuch. So that thus far, if it prove to be true, theſe Propoſitions wherein the *Trinity* is reveal'd, will hold good againſt them at the day of Judgment, and render them without *Excuſe*.

2. As to the ſecond thing, I ſee no *Contradiction* in it; and if there were, I would utterly reject it. For to ſay that *Three* are *One*, is ſo far from being a contradiction, that there is nothing more common in ordinary diſcourſe, than for any

one

one to ſay, that *Three* or any other greater number of things, are but one; and if every Man who ſpoke ſuch *ſeeming* contradictions, were *catch'd* up immediately, and forc'd to explain himſelf upon all ſuch occaſions, it wou'd make *converſation* very troubleſome. As if one ſhou'd ſay, that *there are three diſtinct things in a Man*, a *Body*, the *Animal Spirits*, and an *Immaterial Subſtance*, and yet theſe *Three* are but *One*; and he ſhou'd be forc'd to explain himſelf and ſay, that his *meaning* is not, that *Three* Men are *One* Man, or that *One* Man is *Three* Men. They who cry there is a *Contradiction* in this *Myſtery*, ſeem to me neither to know what a Contradiction is, nor what is the Chriſtian Faith concerning the Trinity. For we don't believe that the *Divinity* is *One* and *Three* in the ſame ſenſe; then indeed it wou'd be a contradiction. But we affirm the quite contrary, *viz.* that the Godhead is *One* and *Three* in *different reſpects*. So that all this noiſe of *Contradiction* vaniſhes, and the whole force of the Objection amounts to no more than this, *viz.* That we are not able to conceive, in what *reſpect* he is *one*, and in what reſpect he is *three*; and therefore becauſe we have no clear and diſtinct Idea of this,

we

we muſt utterly reject it. I grant we are not able to *account* for this, and it is this that makes it a *Myſtery*, and if I cou'd clearly ſolve the manner of this *Union* and *Diſtinction* it wou'd ceaſe to be ſuch. Thus much of it is purely the *Object* of my *Faith*, and the *Authority* of God is the only ground of my aſſent to this part of it. But then,

3. I have ſufficient proof of this *Revelation*'s coming from God. I have for *This*, all the proof that I have for the *Truth* of the *Scriptures*, and the Divine Miſſion of the Perſons who wrote them; ſo that I muſt either *reject* all *reveal'd Religion*, or allow *This* to be an Article of my Faith.

But perhaps this Man will Object, that though he ſhou'd grant it to be an *Article* of *Faith*, yet it is ſo no farther than we can *comprehend* it. But I have already made it out at the beginning, that both what we do, and what we cannot know are both in groſs call'd the ſame *Myſtery*; and that my aſſent to what I do *not apprehend*, is founded upon the *Authority* of God, but my aſſent to what I do apprehend is founded upon Evidence: The firſt aſſent is properly Faith, the laſt is Knowledge. And

And ſo likewiſe if I were to give an account of my belief of the *DIVINITY OF THE SON*, it ſhou'd be thus.

I am convinc'd by the *Completion* of Prophecies, the *Miracles* he wrought, and the agreeableneſs of his *Doctrine* to the natural ſentiments of our Minds, that whatever *Jeſus Chriſt* was, He came from God. I find him in many places aſſuming to himſelf the *Name*, and *Titles*, and *Worſhip* of God. In diſcourſing with the *Jews* he uſeth this form of Speech, *Before Abraham* was I AM, on purpoſe to ſignifie to them, that he was that very *Divine Being* which was reveal'd to *Moſes* under that *Name*. And ſometime after he tells them, that as he was the Son of God, ſo *He and the Father were one*. That the Jews underſtood him in *this ſenſe* I am ſure, becauſe they took up Stones at each of theſe ſayings, to ſtone him as a *Blaſphemer*, becauſe *he made himſelf equal with* God. If theſe expreſſions were not to be underſtood in the *ſenſe* they took them, he wou'd certainly have *undeceived* them, and have made it known, that he was not God in the ſenſe they underſtood him; but that he was only a God by

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Deputation, according to the wild notion of the *Socinians*. But he ſpoke the *Truth*, and the Jews underſtood him *right*, *That he was eternal God equal with the Father*, the very ſame God who was ſignify'd by that ſacred name I A M. And he hath never undeceiv'd either *them* or *us* to this day; but inſtead thereof hath us'd many Expreſſions to *countenance* and *encourage* this notion of him; and therefore if I act like a reaſonable Man, I am under a neceſſity either *of giving my aſſent to this*, or of *utterly rejecting him as an Impoſtor*.

Now had he been an Impoſtor, God who ſhew'd himſelf always very *jealous* of his *Honour*, wou'd never have confirm'd this Doctrine of his with ſuch repeated *Teſtimonies*. If we ſuppoſe him to be only a *Meſſenger* come from God, and a *meer Man* who ſpoke only by his *Spirit* and *Commiſſion*, he wou'd never have us'd ſuch Expreſſions as muſt naturally be *miſunderſtood*, and lead thouſands into the groſs ſin of *Idolatry*, which of all others is the moſt deteſtable to God. *Moſes* was never ſuffer'd to enter into the Land of *Canaan*, for a much *leſs ſuſpicious* Expreſſion, and in the heat of *paſſion* too. *Muſt we bring water out of the Rock?* which was a *vain-glorious inſinuation*, that they

wrought that Miracle by their own immediate power, and proper efficacy. This comes much short of these Expressions of our Saviour's, *destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it again. I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up. And before Abraham was I am.* And indeed that passage concerning *Moses*, seems to have been upon *Record* by the special providence of God for this very purpose, that it might be a good argument of conviction to the *Jews* of the Divinity of the Son, since this inference was very natural and obvious from it, *viz.*

If God was so incens'd with Moses *for making use of one Expression, which seem'd to encroach upon his Prerogative; then how far wou'd he have been from giving Testimony, of much more frequent and greater Miracles, to a Person who by many plainer Expressions, assum'd to himself the full power and perfection of the Godhead; if he were not really what he gave himself out to be.*

For this reason I say because I can't reject him as an *Impostor*, therefore I believe this Proposition, and confess, the blessed Jesus

Jeſus the Son of God to be Eternal God equal with the Father.

Now thus far I proceed in this *Myſtery* upon the ſtricteſt rules of *Reaſon* and *Evidence*, and my Faith of this Propoſition is founded upon *clear* and *diſtinct Idea's*; for I know clearly who I mean by *Jeſus Chriſt*, (*i. e.*) that *Perſon* who was born of the *Virgin Mary*, and Crucified under *Pontius Pilate*; I have a clear and diſtinct Idea of what it is for *one thing to be equal to another*; and I apprehend very well what is ſignify'd by the name of *God* here, (*i. e.*) that Divine Being whoſe neceſſary *Exiſtence*, I infer from that clear knowledge I have of his Creatures: And of whoſe *Nature*, though I have not the leaſt notion *as it is in it ſelf*, yet I form the beſt Idea of him I can by enlarging all the *Perfections* that are diſcernable in the Creatures. And I have a clear and diſtinct Idea, of what it is for *one Perſon to be the Son of another*. Thus I underſtand the *meaning of the words*; nor is there any thing in them *contradictory* to my Reaſon. And laſtly, I have clear and diſtinct Idea's of thoſe *miraculous proofs* to the ſenſes of Men; and of thoſe *completions* of *Prophecies*; and the excellency of that *Doctrine* they confirm,

the agreeableneſs of it to the common notions of Men, and its natural tendency to make Men *eaſie* and *pleaſant*, and *uſeful* to one another. All which raiſe ſuch an Evidence or Knowledge in my mind of the *Divinity* of his Miſſion who reveal'd this Propoſition to me, that I muſt do *violence* to my Reaſon, if I do not give my aſſent to it. And thus far it is not ſo properly and ſtrictly a *Myſtery*.

But when I think of this Propoſition again, *Jeſus the Son of God, is God equal with the Father.* I muſt own at the ſame time I give my *aſſent* to it, I have no knowledge at all of that *Eternal Generation*, which I form an *improper Idea* of from the *Procreation of one Man from another.* Nor have I any notion of this wonderful *Union* of the Humane nature with the Divinity. Nor can I in the leaſt imagine wherein this *Equality* conſiſts. Theſe and all other things relating to the manner of it, are wholly out of the reach of all my *Capacities*, and totally obſcur'd from me. Theſe are the things which make it a *Myſtery*, and in reſpect of this part of it, the *Authority* or *Veracity* of God, is the only ground of my *Perſwaſion*; and my Chriſtian Faith of

this

this Article conſiſts, in thus giving my aſſent to the *exiſtence* of things which I have no notion of, when he hath taken care to give me undoubted Teſtimonies, of the Revelation's coming from him. And I truſt he will accept of it, becauſe 'tis no *raſh inconſiderate aſſent*, but that I uſe thoſe powers of knowledge I have, as *ſtrictly* and *impartially* in this, as I wou'd do in any affair which immediately concern'd my life.

And thus I hope it plainly appears, how little reaſon theſe People have to talk to us of a *blind implicite aſſent* or *eaſie credulity*, ſince in our *Chriſtian Faith* we proceed upon the ſtricteſt rules of *Reaſon*, and build our aſſent upon no foundation but what we know to be *firm*.

And now before I proceed to the other part of his Book, I ſhall repeat in ſhort the Principles he lays down for himſelf to go upon in this, and the following Books which he threatens the World with.

The whole ſumme of his Logick in ſhort then is this.

1. *Evidence is the only ground of Perſwaſion* (i. e.) you can never give your aſſent even to the *reality* or *exiſtence* of a-

ny thing, but when you know as much of it as you do of any thing in the World: and comprehend it as fully and perfectly as that 2 and 3 make 5. which is plainly to say, *you can never believe any thing, but when it is so clearly known to you, that you can't help believing it*; for no Man can hinder his assent to a thing he knows perfectly well: As no Man can help believing that 2 and 2 make 4. A thing may be very true indeed, and you not believe it; but if this truth be evident to you, your assent must necessarily follow. So that you can believe nothing, but *when you can't help it*; and when you can't avoid it, then *you must*
P. 22. *believe it*; for *God hath taken it out of our power to dissent from an evident Proposition.* And *our kind Disposer hath put us*
P. 23. *under a Law, of bowing before the Light and Majesty of Evidence*, and therefore this Man must make such an Idol of it as totally to exclude all difference, or assent to the Word of the true God. For another Principle of his is

2. *That Authority is only a means of Information*, (i.e.) you can believe neither God, nor Man upon their *Word*, for they can only relate a thing to you, but neither

ther of them can influence your Mind to an aſſent. So that to ſpeak *plainly*, 'tis all one in reſpect of your aſſent whether God, or Man, or the Devil tells you a thing, for though you are convinc'd that God *always tells truth*, and the Devil is a *Liar*; yet ſtill you believe the thing never the more becauſe it comes from God. Alas! the *veracity* of God is not to be regarded in the caſe; no, you muſt bow before the Light and Majeſty of Evidence only.

But ſuppoſe God and the Devil ſpeak two contrary Propoſitions, as in the caſe of Eve. *In the day that thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely Die.* And, *Thou ſhalt not ſurely Die.* The words of theſe two Propoſitions were *equally clear* to her; ſhe underſtood the *ſubſtance* of them alike; and her *Idea's* of the things ſpoke of were equally *clear* and *diſtinct*. What then was the ground of her aſſent to the latter? it cou'd not be *Evidence*, for according to him, both theſe Propoſitions, had equal pretence to her * aſſent upon this ſcore;

* It may be thought that I have taken a wrong Inſtance, becauſe at firſt ſight, it looks as if it was the conſent only of her Will, without any deluſion of her Underſtanding. But on ſecond thoughts you will

will find, this is no other than to disbelieve the truth of the *Hiſtory*, which records this falſe perſwaſion of her Underſtanding as the temptation which prevail'd upon her; for the conſent of her Will did not follow, till the Devil had remov'd her Objection from that ſaying of Gods, in the day that thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die.

and therefore nothing remains to be the ground of her aſſent, but the Authority either of *God* or of the *Devil*. And find by ſad experience it was the Authority of the latter that ſway'd her.

But 'tis plain, ſhe had a greater degree of Evidence or Knowledge of the truth of the former Propoſition, becauſe ſhe knew it came from God who cou'd not lye; and yet we find ſhe rebell'd againſt this Evidence. Whereas had ſhe been under ſuch a neceſſity of *bowing before the Light and Majeſty of Evidence*, ſhe wou'd not in all likelihood have tranſgreſs'd as ſhe did; and then he had not now been falling down thus proſtrate to *Ignorance* and *Errour*.

That which ſhews the *ridiculouſneſs* of theſe two Principles is, that upon them we can never believe any thing that is to come, though it were the *next hour*. For though we underſtand the mea-

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ning of the Words, and that the *Prophecie* be concerning any of the moſt *familiar Objects* of Senſe and Reaſon, ſo that you have the cleareſt Knowledge of the thing foretold: yet unleſs you will allow *Authority to be a ground of Perſwaſion*, you can never believe the truth of the Relation; for no man can have any knowledge or Evidence of this till the thing comes to paſs. So that as to the truth of the Relation there is nothing left to be the ground of aſſent, but the *Veracity* or *Authority* of ſome Perſon or another. And thus he utterly deſtroys the Faith of all *Prophecies*; for though they may be *true*, yet we can never believe them ſo, till the relation is *evident* to us; and this can never be evident to us, till the things actually *come to paſs*. So that this is a ſhort way of deſtroying the *credit* of every thing in the Goſpel, which for the moſt part ſpeaks of things to come.

I ſaid before that in Divine Propoſitions, *Evidence* was a ground of Perſwaſion in reſpect of the *Relation it ſelf, or act of Revelation*; and here I ſay that in reſpect of the very ſame, Authority is a ground of Perſwaſion. They are both true; and therefore to make this whole Diſcourſe more clear, and prevent all miſtakes

ſtakes as far as I am able, I ſhall once for all, ſhew the difference between *Divine* and *Human Revelations* in reſpect of thoſe three things, which I ſaid were to be conſider'd in every Revelation.

1. *As to the meaning of the Words*, Divine and Humane Revelations are upon equal terms. They muſt be both intelligible alike, and thus far Evidence or Knowledge is the only ground of Perſwaſion in each of them.

2. *As to the ſubſtance of the thing reveal'd*, in many caſes they both agree in this too, *viz.* That they are *equally intelligible*; for ſome of the Revelations of God, are concerning things as knowable by us, as the ordinary Phænomena of Nature. But in reſpect of a reveal'd Myſtery, Divine and Human Revelations are directly oppoſite, for the ſubſtance of the thing intended by the revelation, in one muſt be always intelligible, but in the other it is totally obſcur'd. But.

3. *As to the truth of the Relation* it ſelf, or the *very act of Revelation* there is this difference; that in all *Human* Revelations Authority is the only ground of Perſwaſion;

ſion; becauſe no meer Man can give any proof, which ſhall amount to more than a probability or ſtrong preſumption. But in *Divine Propoſitions*, the truth of the *Relation* is founded both upon Evidence and Authority. 1. Upon *Evidence*, as the truth of it is confirmed by Teſtimonies which are certain and infallible, as Prophecy, or Miracles, &c. which can come from none but God, and therefore create a degree of Knowledge beyond what is poſſible to be had of any relation meerly Human. 2*dly*. Upon *Authority*, as this Knowledge is not directly of the thing it ſelf, and therefore that we do not know the truth of it by any *direct* or *immediate intuition*. So that theſe Teſtimonies are only to convince us that the Revelation comes from God, and then we give our aſſent to the truth of them purely upon the account of his Veracity. A third Principle of his is, That,

3. *Divine and Human Revelations differ not as to Perſpicuity*. (i. e.) You muſt underſtand the meaning of the Words in Divine Propoſitions as well as Humane; for as for *unintelligible Relations, we can no more believe them from the Revelation of God, than from that of Man*. A very ſubtil Pag. 42.

til piece of Logick indeed, if he had deſign'd no more than he ſpoke. But he hath a farther drift in it; he knew it was not every *Reader* wou'd diſtinguiſh between *the Senſe and Meaning of the Propoſition*, which we grant muſt be equally clear and perſpicuous in both, in order to an aſſent; and, *The reality and exiſtence of the thing, and truth of the Revelation*, in reſpect of which, the Revelations of God always carry a greater degree of *Perſpicuity*; becauſe of that Evidence in the Mind occaſion'd by ſuch proofs which it is impoſſible for man to give. What I ſpoke of this before, I levell'd at his deſign rather than his words, as I am forc'd to do in ſeveral other inſtances.

But he will ſay perhaps, theſe proofs may make the Revelation more *certain*, but not more *clear*. I grant they don't explain the words of it. But 'tis plain the *Proofs* make the Revelation never the more *true or certain in it ſelf*: But it is in reſpect of us they make it *more certain*. And to make a Revelation more *certain* in reſpect of us, is to make it more *clear*; and that is to add a greater degree of *Perſpicuity* to it.

4. *We can give our aſſent to nothing, but what we have clear and diſtinct Idea's of.* (*i.e.*)

(*i. e.*) We can believe nothing but what we have the immediate perception of *Senſe*, or *Demonſtration* for, or know by direct and immediate *Intuition*.

Such ſtuff as this he lays down for Logick, and if you will argue with him, it muſt be in his own Method, and upon his own Principles; and then to be ſure he will be too hard for you. But if you put him out of his Biaſs, and keep him to plain undiſguis'd Reaſon, and the receiv'd rules of Arguing, you ſpoil him quite.

Now by this time who ſo blind as not to ſee? That the deſign of this Book is *To ſtrike at the Root and Foundation of all reveal'd Religion*. And now I have thus brought this Man out of the Clouds, I need not ſpend much time in ſtriping him of his diſguiſe; for the inferences he wou'd have people make from theſe Principles, are ſo *glaring* and *open*, that every body may ſee them. If Authority be no ground of Perſwaſion, then we muſt not believe the truth of any *Revelation* or *Prophecy*. And if we muſt give our aſſent to nothing, but what we have clear and diſtinct Idea's of, then farewell all Religion both *natural* and *reveal'd*. For we know all Religion *natural* and *reveal'd* is

founded

founded upon the *belief of a Deity*, of the *Immortality of the Soul*, and of *Rewards and Punishments in another World*; but it is impossible for us now to have as clear and distinct Idea's of these, as we have of a *Stock* or a *Stone*; but we infer these truths only from those things whereof we have clear and distinct Idea's; and therefore upon his Principles we must utterly reject them all.

And then since by clear and distinct Idea's he means, *As exact and clear a notion as we have even of sensible Objects*, in one sentence he excludes all assent even to the *reality* and *existence* of every thing in the Gospel that respects another World; and rejects all those *Methods* of our Salvation, which are spoke of in the Bible, as so many *Dreams* and *Fictions*. Thus we must disbelieve the *Resurrection* and *Change* of our Bodies; the *Happiness* of the blest in Heaven; the *Incarnation* and *Divinity* of the Son; the *Trinity of Persons* in the Godhead; the *Operations of the Holy Ghost*, &c. nay the *whole Christian Religion*: Because, as I have sufficiently shewn, we have not such clear and distinct Idea's of these things, as we have of the ordinary Phænomena of nature.

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He cou'd not but ſee this, and therefore we may well conclude this was his drift. But he did not conſider at the ſame time, that this wou'd cut off all aſſent to the very *Being of God.* And though I am fully convinc'd, that he is the moſt inveterate *Enemy* to reveal'd Religion, that hath lately appear'd in Print; however I can ſcarce think he is arriv'd to that height of *Atheiſm* yet, as to deny the exiſtence of God, though he has not as clear and diſtinct an Idea of him, as he has of a Stock or a Stone.

As for his ſecond Section, 'tis all *foreign* to the matter; and all that he ſays about ſeeming contradictions, is plainly level'd at the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, though *Tranſubſtantiation* be the inſtance he makes uſe of. And he proceeds upon the ſame fundamental Error he hath hitherto done, That we can believe nothing but what we have a clear and diſtinct Idea of. Sect. 2.

We ſay as well as he, *That there is no thing contrary to Reaſon in the Goſpel.* P. 25. *That there is no contradiction in any point of Doctrine in it.* P. 26. *That Chriſtianity is a Rational and Intelligible Religion,* P. 46. which are the things he inſiſts upon in this Section, and goes a great way about to prove very

aukwardly.

aukwardly. And therefore what can he mean by it, unleſs it be to make *unthinking* People fancy we deny all this. If he hath any thing to object againſt our Doctrine of the Church of *England* or *Ireland*, let him ſpeak plainly: but nothing is more vile and diſingenuous, than for a Man to ſpeak thus indiſtinctly and confuſedly, and talk all in the *general* with deſign to make People think us guilty of thoſe *errors* we deteſt and abhor. If he has any controverſie with us, let him deal honeſtly, and inſtance in any one point of Doctrine we believe or teach, that is contrary to *Reaſon* or *Scripture*; and make it out as plainly, as I have done his Principles to be ſuch. If not, let him own he had no other deſign but to expoſe the *Chriſtian Religion*, and its *Teachers*; and gratifie the *Rancour* of a ſort of People, who becauſe of their lewd and debauch'd lives, muſt naturally hate that Inſtitution, which they ſhall one day be condemn'd by; and which promiſes them nothing but *Damnation* in another World.

This Book which goes under his name, is exactly calculated for them; there is a little ſuperficial ſhew of Learning to make it plauſible, but not one inſtance in all the

the Book of cloſe Reaſon or Argument. Let him ſhew me where one link of my *Reaſoning* fails, and I will make it up again ſo firm, that he ſhall never be able to undo it. Whereas all his whole Diſcourſe is a meer *Rope of Sand*; many bold and falſe Aſſertions, ſly Inſinuations, and ſeveral things, nothing at all to the queſtion, huddled up together on purpoſe to patch up a Book; and amuſe ſuch perſons who have juſt Logick enough to be impos'd upon by a Fallacy, but not to ſee through it.

Now after this long digreſſion of *two* Sect. 3. *Sections*, in his third and laſt Section he comes at length to the matter in diſpute, but with what ſucceſs we ſhall ſee.

Here he begins to ſtate the queſtion a- P. 66. gain, and ſays a *Doctrine above Reaſon*, or a *Myſtery* denotes one of theſe two things. Either,

1. *A thing intelligible in it ſelf, but co-* P. 66. *ver'd with ſuch a Veil, that Reaſon cannot penetrate to ſee what is under it, till it be remov'd.*

Which definition agrees perfectly to the Myſteries of the Goſpel; for they are all things *intelligible in themſelves*, but in

this life *ſo obſcur'd from us by this Veil* of fleſh and blood, that with our ſtrongeſt Imagination and cloſeſt Reaſonings, *we can't penetrate into* the true nature of them, *till this Veil be remov'd*; and then we ſhall ſee them clearly. Now this is not the definition that he quarrels with, and if he will admit of this little enlargement of it, we are both agreed. But the definition he finds fault with, is this.

P. 66. 2. A Myſtery *is a thing of its own nature unconceivable, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's, though it be never ſo clearly reveal'd.*

I never met with any one Sentence, ſo fraught with abſurdity as this is. For,

1. *It ſignifies a thing in its own nature unconceivable,* this is a down-right falſity. For every Myſtery is in its own nature *conceivable*; the more truth any thing hath in it the more *conceivable* it is in it ſelf; the Myſteries of Chriſtianity are the *Eternal Truths* of God, and therefore are in themſelves conceivable. But it is *in reſpect of us* that they are not ſo, becauſe of the frail and limited condition of our underſtandings in this life.

2. *Not*

2. *Not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's, though it be clearly reveal'd.* Now for a thing to be *clearly reveal'd* to a Man, and yet that ſame Man know nothing of it (which is his ſenſe of the words, and which he would faſten upon us) is a perfect *contradiction.* For it is no other than ſaying, *that the ſame Man may, and may not know the ſame thing, at the ſame time.* He can never come off by ſaying that a thing may be clearly reveal'd, and yet the Perſon may have no ability to apprehend any thing of it; for all *Revelation* ſuppoſes a *capacity* in the Perſon to whom it is made, to apprehend ſomething of it; and therefore 'tis nonſenſe to ſay, *that any thing can be clearly reveal'd to a Horſe, or* a Stock or a Stone.

3. Beſides it is abſolutely falſe, *that the Myſteries of our Religion are not to be judg'd of, by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's.* It hath already appear'd, that as to the thing ſignified and intended in the *Revelation,* we have no Idea, nor faculty to judge of it as it is in it ſelf. But as to all thoſe *means,* whereby God hath diſcover'd the reality and exiſtence of thoſe things to us, we may judge of them all

by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's. And to make this plain, let us inſtance in the ſame Myſtery of the Reſurrection.

Our Bodies ſown in Corruption, ſhall be rais'd in Incorruption.

This is one of the reveal'd Myſteries of the Goſpel, and yet we are to judge of it by our ordinary Faculties and Ideas. For we have Idea's in our heads of what *a body is*; what it is to be *ſown or laid in the ground*; what it is *to be rais'd*; and what it is for a *body to be improv'd when it is ſo.* Beſides our *Faculties* of Underſtanding are imploy'd, in conſidering thoſe *many arguments* which prove the truth of this Myſtery; and therefore 'tis plain that by our *Faculties* and *Idea's*, we can judge of that part of it which is knowable by us. But he will ſay, we can't judge of that part of it which is totally obſcur'd from us, and therefore ſo far it is no *part of our Faith*, and we are wholly unconcern'd in it. But on the contrary, we are bound by expreſs words of Scripture, to believe that this Improvement will be very great, as in 1 *John* 3. 2. *We know not yet what we ſhall be, but we know that when he ſhall appear we ſhall be like him.*

Here

Here we are bound to believe that we ſhall be like Chriſt, though we know not what this likeneſs is, or wherein it will conſiſt.

4. On this ſuppoſition, that a *thing is in its own nature unconceivable*, how is it poſſible for it to be reveal'd? This is another flat *Contradiction ex Parte Rei*, as the firſt was *ex Parte Hominis*. A thing is in its own nature unconceivable, and yet it may be reveal'd (*i. e.*) *the ſame thing may, and may not be reveal'd.*

5. He makes a thing's being *in its own nature unconceivable*, and *not to be perceiv'd by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's*, to ſignifie the ſame thing; whereas they are juſt as different as Light and Darkneſs. Though our capacities are now dark and ſhallow, yet they will hereafter be improv'd and enlarg'd; and then we ſhall have extraordinary Idea's to repreſent to us what we have no notion of now: And then the thing will be no way *unconceivable* either in it ſelf, or in reſpect of us.

Theſe are not all the abſurdities in this ſentence; and yet it is the very *Monſter* this *Knight errant* ſets up for himſelf to engage with. It is the ſpurious off-ſpring

of his own brain, and yet he fathers it upon us, by introducing it with this expreſſion, *It is made to ſignifie*, &c. But it was never *made* to ſignifie this by any beſides himſelf. *I ſhou'd have read the Goſpel a Million of times over before this definition of a Myſtery wou'd have come into my head.* Here he hath made his own words good; *That Contradiction and Myſtery are two emphatical ways of ſaying nothing*; He lays down this abſurd definition of a Myſtery, and then ſets himſelf with a great deal of Solemnity to encounter it, which is in truth no other than for a Man to put himſelf into a ridiculous *antick poſture*, and then quarrel with his ſhadow for it.

It is hard to tell how to proceed with this Man, he has been running away from the *Queſtion* ever ſince he began; and now that he put us in hopes of coming to it again, you ſee how groſsly we are diſappointed. I wou'd with all my heart ſtick by the firſt definition of a Myſtery, which with a little addition I allow to be very good.

A Chriſtian Myſtery is a Divine Truth intelligible of it ſelf, but ſo cover'd and obſcur'd from us now in this life, that Reaſon can't penetrate the Veil to ſee what is under it, till this Veil be remov'd in another life.

life by the glorification of our Bodies. Let him confute this definition if he can, for I will never fall out with him about the other; he ſhall have it all to himſelf, 'tis his own *Creature*, let him be as ſevere upon it as he pleaſes. But becauſe he has ſo blindly miſtook the matter, I muſt tell him once more what it is he is to prove, if he has any controverſie with us in this point. He is to prove theſe two things.

1. *That there is nothing reveal'd to us in the Goſpel but what we have clear and diſtinct Idea's of,* (*i. e.*) either a full comprehenſive knowledge of; or as clear and diſtinct notions, as we have of any ordinary Object in nature. And,

2. *That we are not oblig'd by Scripture, to believe that there is any thing intended in ſome points reveal'd, beyond what we are now able thus to comprehend.*

Theſe are the things which lay upon him to prove, if he wou'd have ſpoke to the purpoſe.

It is impoſſible that any Man ſhou'd argue cloſely, who miſtakes the Queſtion as he does; however I ſhall conſider what there is in the reſt of his Book that looks

like reaſoning. He does not proceed to proof yet, but runs upon another Digreſſion, to tell us the ſignification of the word *Myſtery*, and particularly what it ſignify'd among the *Gentiles*. But what is this to us? It ſignifies quite another thing among the *Chriſtians*. But he ſays not, *for in the New Teſtament Myſtery is always us'd in the firſt ſenſe of the word, or that of the Gentiles*, viz.

P. 68.

P. 73. *For things naturally very intelligible, but ſo covered by figurative Words or Rites, that Reaſon cou'd not diſcover them without ſpecial Revelation.* This is the deſcription which he gives both of the Gentile, and Chriſtian Myſteries in common.

But taking a Chriſtian Myſtery even in his own ſenſe, (*i. e.*) *As it was involv'd in Jewiſh Types and Ceremonies*; yet they differ very much from thoſe myſteries of the Gentiles. For,

1. The Chriſtian Myſteries were not diſcoverable but by the *ſpecial Revelation* of God, whereas thoſe of the Gentiles were diſcoverable by the *Revelation of a Man.*

2. Beſides 'tis abſolutely falſe that the things involv'd in the Jewiſh Types were

in

in their own Nature every intelligible. For they were all of ſuch a Nature, that men cou'd never have arriv'd to the leaſt degree of knowledge concerning them by ſtrength of Reaſon; whereas there was nothing in the Heathen Myſteries but what was in it ſelf very obvious to Reaſon.

3. The matters contain'd in the Jewiſh Myſteries and the things intended by them, were ſuch as concern'd the *Eternal ſalvation of Mens Souls*, whereas the things contain'd in thoſe of the Heathen were to a quite contrary purpoſe, in order to *Idolatry*, and many other groſs ſins. And it is not without very good reaſon I take notice of this difference here, for though it doth not hit this deſcription of his immediately, becauſe he may perhaps ſay *thoſe were thought to be the concernment of Souls too:* yet it is levell'd at the main deſign of his Book, which by this time no man can be ignorant of.

4. The things contain'd in the Jewiſh Myſteries, the *Prieſts themſelves were ignorant of*; whereas the Heathen Prieſts for the moſt part *knew the bottom of theirs*, and conceal'd them induſtriouſly from the

the People. And this is what he wou'd insinuate of all Christian Priests, *viz.* That we fully comprehend the meaning of all these things our selves, and palm them upon the People for Mysteries. Which is the occasion of those virulent expres-
P. 72. sions of his in this Chapter, *That through ignorance or passion we maintain, what was introduc'd by the craft or superstition of our*
P. 73. *fore fathers.* And calls it a *Gainful Opinion*; as if the only design of Christian Mysteries, were to bring in Money to the Priests. He calls Christianity as it is now
P. 73. receiv'd an *Implicite Constitution*; and says *the Venerable Teachers, play at this small*
P. 74. *game to amuse the People.* But he, like a sharp inquisitive man it seems, has found out our Mysteries, and is resolv'd in his next Book to discover them all, and lay us open to the World, like *Heathen Priests as he makes us.*

And now I come to his *second Chapter*
P. 74. of the *third Section*, where there is the first appearance of any thing like a reason; there is but one argument in all that *Chapter*, and indeed in all the *Book*; and because he delivers it confus'dly, I will reduce it to form, and then we shall see clearly what *force* there is in it. And if he thinks I don't do him justice, let him manage

manage it better for himſelf if he can. The whole ſtrength of his arguing is this.

If we have as clear and diſtinct Idea's of every thing reveal'd in the Goſpel, as we have of any thing in Nature, then there are no Myſteries in it.

But we have as clear and diſtinct Idea's of every thing reveal'd in the Goſpel, as we have of any thing in Nature: Therefore,

There are no Myſteries in the Goſpel.

The Minor he proves thus

If we have as clear and diſtinct Idea's of God and Eternity, as we have of any thing in nature, then we have as clear and diſtinct Idea's of every thing reveal'd in the Goſpel, as we have of any thing in Nature.

But we have as clear and diſtinct Idea's of God and Eternity, as we have of any thing in Nature. Ergo Pag. 86.

Now do but deny this *Minor*, and he puts you off to another Book for the proof of it, and this is the whole ſubſtance of his reaſoning here. But to paſs by the *Impitey* and *Prophaneneſs* of that ſaying of his, *That the Divine Being it ſelf is not more Myſterious than the moſt contemptible*

of

of his Creatures, I will give him a reason why it is impossible for him ever to prove what he pretends. And that is, because even the most glorious of his Creatures *are infinite and limited*, whereas the nature of God is *Infinite*; and therefore even when we come to Heaven, he will be *mysterious* to us in a more proper sense than any thing else, because we shall not even then have as full and comprehensive a knowledge of him, as we shall have of *the greatest* of his Creatures.

P. 75. That which he builds upon is this, *That nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, and a distinct view of all it's properties at once.* But who ever said that the Mysteries of the Gospel were such only for this reason? I grant him if this were all, then as he says, *every thing in nature would be a mystery*, for we have not a full and perfect knowledge of any thing. The true reason why our Christian Mysteries are such in a more peculiar and proper sense is, because the Idea's we have of them are more imperfect and less adequate, than those we have of the ordinary phænomena of Nature. This is the point in difference between us, *Whether we have as perfect and comprehensive a knowledge of every thing*

thing reveal'd in the Goſpel, as we have of any thing in Nature. This is what he affirms, and we deny; and for proof as I ſaid before, he refers us to another Book in reverſion. Here he only affirms it boldly, and inſtead of proving *that our notions of theſe divine things are as exact and full, as the notions we have even of ſenſible Objects*; he ſpends this whole Chapter in proving by ſeveral inſtances, as of the Table he writes upon; of Rain, and a drop of Water, *&c.* that we have not an adequate Idea of any thing. But why does he thus beat the Air? who ever deny'd it? and yet this poor *hungry* thought, is the only appearance of an Argument through his Book; it was for this only the whole was wrote, and the only skill he has ſhewn in it, is in beating up ſo little *Senſe*, into all this *Froth*.

Now becauſe there is no Proof here, there can be no farther Anſwer: However ſince he hath order'd the matter ſo as to make it look like Reaſoning, to amuſe the Minds of unthinking People, I ſhall ſhew the difference between the things reveal'd to us in the Goſpel, and the uſual Phænomena of nature with reſpect to the meaſures of our knowledge. And therefore,

1. Though

1. Though we ſhou'd grant what is abſolutely *falſe*, and what he was to have given ſome proof for; if he had been able, *that the things reveal'd in the Goſpel, and the ordinary Objects of our Senſes, were upon the ſame level as to our Knowledge*, that we are equally ignorant of both, and comprehend them alike; yet his Inference wou'd not follow from hence, viz. *That the things reveal'd in the Goſpel are not Myſteries, in a more proper ſenſe than a Spire of Graſs, a Stock or Stone.* For though we are equally ignorant of two things, yet there may be much more behind to be known in one than in the other; and therefore upon this ſcore, may much more properly be call'd a Myſtery. For certainly though we knew as much of God now as we do of a *Stock or a Stone*, yet ſure he will allow there is infinitely more yet to be known in that Fountain of all Perfection, that rich Treaſure of Wiſdom, which is ſo far from being comprehended now, that he ſhall never be exhauſted to all eternity.

We way ſay the ſame of all the other Myſteries of Chriſtianity, though we ſhou'd grant our Idea's of them were as perfect, and that we knew as much of them

them now as we do of any thing in nature, yet becauſe they *are infinitely more excellent* in themſelves; and that there is much more behind to be known in them, yet they wou'd deſerve the name of *Myſteries* in a much more *proper ſenſe* than any thing in nature. Eſpecially if we add that they are not only more *excellent* in themſelves, but they are of much greater *concernment* to us, as they relate to *the ſalvation of our Souls*, and our well-being for ever in another World: Which makes them deſerve more regard, and conſequently a *better name* if we have it to give them.

Wherefore we may well wonder what end any man cou'd have in ſtarting ſuch a *notion* as this is, unleſs it were to vilify and debaſe the *Doctrines* of the Goſpel; and cunningly to leſſen all *reveal'd Religion* and it's *Teachers* in the opinion of men, as if they already had too great thoughts of *God* and his *Revelations*.

2. But there is a yet greater *difference* than this, for the things reveal'd in the Goſpel, as to that part of them which makes them *Myſterious*, are ſuch as *exceed our preſent Capacities* of Knowledge; whereas all the things of Nature fall within their *Sphere*, and are in themſelves immediate

mediate and proper objects of our Senſe and Reaſon. Though many of them are ſuch, that we neither do, nor ever can actually know any thing of them. And to lay this difference open to all, we muſt conſider that this of *being above Reaſon* is an æquivocal expreſſion, and ſignifies two very *different* things.

1, *It ſignifies a thing which does not exceed our powers of underſtanding; but is conceal'd from us, and lies out of our reach,* by ſome *accidental impediment or obſtruction, which it is impoſſible for us to remove.* And in this Senſe it is above our Reaſon to know certainly, *what is at the center of the Earth;* or *whether there be any Inhabitants in Saturn,* or of what ſpecies they are; *what are the true motions of the Heavenly Bodies, and what order they obſerve among themſelves;* and the *different configuration of the little parts of matter,* &c. That which makes theſe things above our Reaſon, is not any thing *eſſential to them,* but ſomething *accidental.* And therefore we find our knowledge very much improv'd, and promoted by the help of Glaſſes, which diſcover things that by reaſon of their ſmalneſs, and diſtance were not perceptible by the naked eye, nor certainly diſcove-

diſcoverable by Reaſon. So that we may ſay, many things were above our Reaſon before theſe helps were found out, which are not ſo now; and if theſe helps cou'd be carried on and improved to that degree, as to lay open to our view the ſmalleſt parts of matter, and at the greateſt diſtance; or that a *rational account* were given us, of all the Phænomena in Nature, by any *intelligent Being* ſuperior to ours, we ſhould apprehend it diſtinctly and perfectly, and then nothing in nature wou'd be *above our Reaſon.*

2. To be above our Reaſon ſignifies, *A thing which in its own nature exceeds our preſent Capacities, and is no proper object of thoſe faculties of knowledge which we are now endu'd withall.* And in this Senſe the nature of God is more properly above our Reaſon than a *Stock or a Stone*, *Eternity* than *Time*; a *Spirit*, than a *Body*; the *Joys* of Heaven, than *Senſual Pleaſures*; the eternal *Generation* of the Son, than the ordinary *Procreation* of Man; the *operations* of the Holy Spirit, than the *nouriſhment* of our Bodies, *&c.* There is as yet no proportion between theſe *Objects* and our *Faculties* of Knowledge; our intellectual powers are not yet form'd and ſo

adapted for them, as they are for thoſe things in Nature, which are the proper objects of our Senſe and Reaſon now. So that it is a more improper way of ſpeaking, to ſay *that theſe things ſhould be clearly reveal'd to us now, as they are in themſelves*; than to ſay *that a nice point in Divinity or Philoſophy, ſhou'd be clearly explain'd to an Infant.* They are indeed plainly reveal'd to us as to their reality and exiſtence but not clearly as to the true nature of the things. Nothing in the World is more evident than that ſuch things are reveal'd to us; but what or how they are in themſelves, is impoſſible for us to comprehend. And this is what the Apoſtle means by that ſaying, *That Eye has not ſeen nor Ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of Man the things which God hath laid up for them that love him.* Which Words, though by the context they are more immediately ſpoke of things paſt, and then reveal'd in part; yet they have a farther reference to the full completion of all theſe things in another World.

1 Cor. 2. 9.

I ſhall make this whole matter plain by an Inſtance. A Perſon who was born blind knows as little of the *Sun* as he does of the *real nature of God*; he feels the *heat* and

and *warmth* of it; he is *cheriſh'd* by it, and lives and thrives by the ſecret influences of it; but he neither knows *where*, nor *what* it is: and if he had been ever told that all this was the immediate act of God, he wou'd have thought ſo, for he knows nothing of the Sun beſides the name. Now upon this Authors Principles, the nature of the Sun, and the nature of God are both equally a Myſtery to this Blind Man. That he is equally ignorant of the true nature of both I grant, however they are not equally a Myſtery to him. And that this may appear, let us ſuppoſe this Mans Eyes were opened; then he wou'd ſee clearly that the Sun is a *large*, *round*, *lucid Body* in the Firmament: but he wou'd be hereby enabled to know nothing more of the true nature of God than he did before. And why? becauſe this is beyond the reach of all his natural powers of Knowledge; and if all his Senſes were improv'd to be a thouſand times nicer than they are, though he wou'd ſee much deeper into the nature of all things here, yet the *nature of God*, and the *things relating to another Life* wou'd lie as much out of his reach as ever; he wou'd even then know as little of the Glory of God, as that Man did of the Sun before his Eyes

were opened. For Light it ſelf is but a *Metaphor*, adapted to our groſs Capacities to ſignify the Glory of God, which we are told in the Revelations is to be inſtead of light in Heaven.

But becauſe this is an Inſtance only of a ſenſible Object, let us take another of Reaſon. Let us ſuppoſe an *illiterate* perſon, who never heard of *Chriſtianity*, or the *Mathematicks* is equally ignorant of theſe two Propoſitions.

The three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two Right ones. And this

We ſhall be rais'd in the likeneſs of Chriſt.

Theſe two Propoſitions this *Derider* of all reveal'd truths will ſay, are alike myſterious to this Man. Whereas the contrary will evidently appear if we but take this Man and teach him Mathematicks, then he ſhall perfectly apprehend all that is to be known of that demonſtration, and how it is impoſſible it ſhou'd be otherwiſe. But teach him the *Goſpel*, and make him as learned as he is capable in the Chriſtian Religion, he ſhall know nothing more of that Propoſition (though he ſhall be better convinc'd of the Truth of

of it) than he did at firſt hearing. And why? becauſe the *one* was a truth in nature within the ſphere of his intellectual powers; the *other* is *ſupernatural* and he can never have any notion of the manner of it, till he has new Faculties or thoſe he already hath are greatly enlarg'd.

But this matter will clear up farther, if we compare ſome of the Myſteries of our Religion with thoſe things in Nature which bear the greateſt *Analogy* with them, and by which they are repreſented to us in the Scriptures.

If we ſay a *Son* is like his Father, we immediately conceive in our Minds the ſame *Stature, Countenance, Lineaments,* and *Complexion*; or the ſame *Humour, Diſpoſition, natural parts* and *Inclinations*, &c. ſo that we very well apprehend wherein the *likeneſs* conſiſts. But when we ſay *we ſhall riſe in the likeneſs of Chriſt*, here we ſtop and our Thoughts can reach no farther.

Again when we ſay one Man is the *Son* of another, we apprehend very well the manner of natural procreation, and how it is he came to be his Father. But when we ſay *Chriſt is the Son of God by an Eternal Generation*, we know nothing of the manner of one Spirits producing another nor can we tell how he came to

be born of a Virgin without the concurrence of a Man.

When we ſay the Spirit of God hath a real influence upon ours in the *operation of Grace*, we know much leſs of the manner of it, than we do of one Bodies moving another by contact: and we know the Food we eat nouriſheth us by undergoing ſeveral alterations, and then being converted into the ſubſtance of our Bodies; but we can't know thus much of the manner how Grace adminiſters ſtrength and comfort to our Souls.

Again we know of *time* that it is *finite* and ſucceſſive, and we can meaſure it in certain proportions by the motions of the heavenly Bodies. But as for *Eternity*, for want of a clear Idea we frame a notion of it from time, and thus by a limited thought we do little leſs than deſtroy it's *Being*. For as for ſaying it is a *perpetual Now*, though it be the *prettieſt* thought we have of it, yet if we attend to this we ſhall find, we ſay nothing more than that the ſame Inſtant ſhall remain for ever; and thus attribute that ſucceſſion to one Inſtant of time abſtractedly conſidered, which we us'd to attribute to things which exiſt in it. And therefore it is as groſs

a de-

a deſcription of Eternity, as a flying Boy is of an Angel.

And yet it is very pleaſant to hear how this man talks of it. It is no more *above* our Reaſon becauſe we can't apprehend it, than a Circle is becauſe we may. But why? becauſe Reaſon goes as far as it can in both. The *Circle* is to be imagin'd, but Eternity is not eſſentially imaginable; if it were, Reaſon wou'd have it as well as the Circle, yes that it wou'd: but you wou'd not have Reaſon to imagine any thing that is not to be imagined? And yet but a few lines after he will make us imagine it in his next Book as perfectly as that 3 and 2 make 5. But this is a ſtrange *Circle* in arguing, to prove that *Eternity* is *not above our Reaſon, becauſe it is.* And you ſee the cauſe of this blunder is, becauſe he confounds *Idea* with *Imagination*, one of the beſt diſtinctions we are beholding to the modern Logicians for. 'Tis plain there are many things we have *Idea's* of, which we are not able to imagine, and Eternity is one of them. And becauſe we can't frame any imagination of it; it doth not follow that we can't apprehend it at all, for Reaſon can frame an Idea of it as it doth of the other things of another life (*i. e.*) by

Analogy, and for this reaſon it is more a Myſtery than a Circle which we perfectly imagine.

Once more, though the *Eſſence of matters* lies hid from us, as well as that of a Spirit, yet we know much more of it's properties, as that it hath *Gravity*, *Extenſion*, *Solidity*, *Impenetrability*, *Diviſibility*; and this *Table on which I write* though I can't actually divide it into infinite parts, yet I can carry it on in my Mind, and conceive it diviſible. Now theſe are *properties* of matter which agree to it in general, and are not meer *modifications* of it. But we know no more of a *Spirit* but that it thinks (*i. e.*) juſt enough to prove it's *Exiſtence*, and no more; for as to all the different *modifications* of Thought, it is but thinking ſtill; and therefore is anſwerable but to that one property of *Extenſion* in matter.

Beſides we don't attribute this of *Thinking* immediately and poſitively to a Spirit; for we don't ſay a Spirit thinks becauſe we know ſo much of the real nature of it as to diſcover this: but we ſay it thinks becauſe we can prove that matter can't.

Now when I ſay the Idea we have of a Spirit is not *poſitive*, I mean that it is not ſo in reſpect of our underſtanding; becauſe we

we have no way of attributing it to a Spirit, but by a *negation* of it to matter. I muſt confeſs if we take a *Spirit* in the ſenſe that ſome men do (*i. e.*) only for a *Thinking Being*, then indeed we come to the notion of it by *Reflection*; we find ſomething in us that Thinks, and from thence we immediately attribute it to that *Being*.

But for any thing that is yet concluded, this Thinking Being may be meer matter; and when we proceed to infer the exiſtence of an *immaterial* ſubſtance (which is the true notion of a Spirit, as it is diſtinguiſh'd from matter, and in which ſenſe God is ſaid to be a Spirit) then the Idea we have of it, is as far from being poſitive, as the words by which we expreſs it. Then we have no other way of conceiving it, but by removing from it *Extenſion*, *Diviſibility*, *Solidity*, &c. which are the properties of Body: and we conclude that the ſubſtance in us that thinks muſt be immaterial, becauſe this operation exceeds the power of meer matter, *i. e.* while it is ſuch; for if God ſhould alter all the *properties* of it, ſo as to make it *ſomething elſe*; and not matter, then no one can deny but it may think; but how far this

this implies a contradiction I ſhall not now diſpute.

So that again I can't but wonder any one ſhou'd affirm poſitively, that we have as clear and diſtinct Idea's of the *Nature* and *Properties* of Spirit, as we have of Body.

Letter to the Bp. of Worces: P. 69, 70, 71,

Mr *Lock's* Notion of the *Soul* is only that of a *thinking ſubſtance* without any regard either to the *materiality*, or *immateriality* of it; though one wou'd think he inclines to the former, when he ſhews this to be the ſenſe of the word *Spirit* both in Prophane and Divine Authors. However he ſays afterwards that the utmoſt *Proof* we can have for the immateriality of it will amount only to a *Probability*; and thus much concerning it he thinks deducible from his Principles, and particularly from his ſuppoſition of a *Syſtem of matter*; and adds that he would gladly ſee a better proof of it either from the Biſhop of *Worceſter* or any one elſe. To ſpeak to this now wou'd be no other than a digreſſion from the buſineſs I am upon, but I do not deſpair of giving him this *Demonſtration* which he wou'd ſo gladly ſee; and ſhewing him withal how very much he is out in his application of thoſe Texts of Scripture he makes uſe of. I know 'tis

eaſie

eaſie for a perſon to deny any thing to be demonſtration which is not *mathematically ſuch*; but if it appears that we have as good proof for the *immateriality* of the Soul, as we can reaſonably expect for any *natural* or *moral truth*, this is ſufficient for the conviction of any, except thoſe who by their Principles are oblig'd to oppoſe it.

But to return, it is Evident from what hath been ſaid, that we are ſo far from forming any Idea of Spirit as clear and diſtinct as that we have of matter, that we can't form a ſimple Idea of any property in it, which is poſitive in reſpect of our underſtanding; and therefore ſince *ſimple Idea's* are the foundation of all our knowledge as they are laid down by that *Delicate* and *Curious Head*, which this Man of *Forehead* only has ſo groſly miſtaken; that defect in the firſt principles ſhall run through all our after Reaſonings about the real nature of it, and render them much more *confus'd* and *imperfect* than thoſe concerning matter.

I might ſay the ſame of a *Spiritual* or *Glorified Body*, that we can frame no Idea of it, but by *negation* of thoſe imperfections

ons that are incident to us in this frail conditions of mortality, and thoſe few paſſages related of our Saviour's Body after his Reſurrection, are wholly unaccountable by us; at leaſt much more than the ordinary appearances of Nature; as particularly his *vaniſhing out of their ſight all of a ſuddain; and appearing in the midſt of them, at a time when the doors were ſhut*, &c. and that theſe things were not any miraculous operations, but the real properties of a glorify'd Body, is more likely to think; than that he ſhou'd have rarify'd the *Door*, or the *Walls of the Houſe* to get entrance; or have ſecretly convey'd himſelf in a long with them, as ſome learned Men have endeavour'd to ſolve theſe paſſages. Nor can we conceive how a body ſhou'd be diveſted of its gravity, ſo as to mount the Skies as our Saviour's did at his aſcenſion, and as the Bodies of the Saints ſhall do at the general Reſurrection. None of theſe things are to be ſolv'd upon the common principles of knowledge that are in us now, becauſe we have not capacities ſuitable to the nature of them.

So that now we may wonder what ridiculous meaning this Man can have, when

when he ſays that all the things which are ſpoke of in the Goſpel, are as conſiſtent with our *common notions* as *Wood* and *Stone*; and that we are as properly ſaid to *comprehend* them; and that our Idea's of *natural* and *divine* things are equally clear and diſtinct. A ſtrange fallacious inference this, *becauſe we fully comprehend neither, therefore weare equally ignorant of both.* And to amuſe people that can't ſee this, that he might ſeem to ſpeak ſomething to the purpoſe, he borrows a diſtinction, *viz.* That between the *Nominal* and *Real Eſſence* of a thing. How impertinently he hath made uſe of it in this matter, is very plain from what has been ſaid; which though we grant it to be a good one, yet it is nothing to the purpoſe. But it is ſo far from being a good *Diſtinction*, that it ſeems to me not to be good Senſe. For nothing can be more abſurd than to ſuppoſe *two different Eſſences* in the ſame thing. Nor can any thing be more directly levell'd at thoſe glorious Attributes of God, his *Goodneſs* and *Truth* than what it ſuppoſes, *viz.* That we are thus deceiv'd in every thing, and know nothing at all of the true nature of things by thoſe properties that are diſcernable by us. And therefore to uſe his own words,

words, *This rather becomes Impoſtors to* think, *than the taught of God who hath no intereſt to delude his Creatures, nor wants ability to inform them rightly.*

If it had been ſaid in plain language, that there is ſomething in natural things *we do apprehend*, and ſomething *we do not*; which is all that's meant in that diſtinction: This wou'd have been Philoſophy for the Vulgar; and therefore to make a Myſtery of it, it muſt be call'd the *Nominal* and *Real Eſſence* of a thing: though it carry a flat contradiction in *Phyſicks*, and a monſtrous conſequence in *Morality*, and lays a foundation for Eternal Septiciſm. But ſuppoſing there is a meaning in it both *true* and *innocent*, yet it muſt be own'd this was the moſt unhappy way of expreſſing themſelves, that poſſibly they could have light upon.

Sect. 3. C. III. Thus far as to his arguments from *Reaſon*. Now I come to conſider thoſe he brings from *Scripture*: and we are like to have very cloſe reaſoning from them, when in the very entrance he again confounds theſe two Propoſitions. *Whether or no Chriſtianity is Myſterious*, and *whether there are no Myſteries in Chriſtianity*. Whereas even the latter of them is dubi-

P. 90.

ous;

ous; for the word *Myſtery* is us'd to ſignifie ſeveral things. And therefore to remove all ambiguity, and ſhew the fallacy of his arguing we will lay aſide the *Word*, and ſpeak to the *thing it ſelf*, (*i.e.*) *Whether we have not as clear and diſtinct Idea's, as full and perfect a knowledge of all things reveal'd to us in Scripture, ſince the appearing of Chriſt in the World, as we have of ordinary ſenſible Objects.*

That we had not before he allows, and therefore he grants they were Myſteries then, but now ſince the coming of Chriſt they are not. And the whole ſubſtance of his arguing in this long Chapter is this.

If all thoſe things which were ſignified by the Jewiſh Rites and Ceremonies are clearly reveal'd to us, then they are no longer hidden from us.

But all thoſe things ſignified by the Jewiſh Rites and Ceremonies are clearly reveal'd to us. Therefore,

They are no longer hidden from us.

Thus he proves the Minor.

If the Veil is taken away in Chriſt then they are clearly reveal'd to us.

But

But the Veil is taken away in Christ.
Therefore,
They are clearly reveal'd to us.

And to make this Minor good, he brings all these *Texts* of Scripture, and *Quotations* out of the Fathers; to prove that the Veil is taken away, and that they are clearly reveal'd.

Now if any amongst us had absolutely deny'd that the Veil was taken away, and had affirm'd that they were not plainly reveal'd to us, then he might have had an *adversary*: But there is not a sentence in this Chapter, that looks like a controversie with any but the *Jews*. If this Man wou'd have *argu'd* instead of *Banting*, he wou'd have distinguish'd, and shewn in what sense we *deny it*, and then have prov'd that the Veil was taken away in that sense that we deny. And therefore since he hath dealt *treacherously*, I must make him *honest*, and *distinguish* for him.

And in order to make this matter very plain, we know that there are four things to be reveal'd concerning any thing that is hid from us. Its *Existence*, its *Essence*, its *Properties*, and the *Relation* it hath to us; and every one apprehends at first reading

reading how a thing may be clearly reveal'd as to its *Existence*, together with the relation it hath to us, and yet remain totally obscur'd as to its *Essence* and *Properties*. Now therefore what we say is this.

1. That as to the *internal Essence*, and *real Properties of* these divine things revealed to us from Heaven, we are wholly ignorant of them; and know as little of them in this respect, now they are reveal'd in the Gospel, as was known before when they were involv'd in *Types* and *Figures*.

2. That all these things which we call *Mysteries*, and now reveal'd to us in the Gospel, while they were veil'd in Types and Figures under the Mosaick œconomy, were very much obscur'd as to their *Existence*, and to the *concernment of Mankind in them*; and therefore the Law is said to have had only a shadow of good things to come, (*i. e.*) Men had but a very dark and imperfect knowledge even of the *reality*, and *being*, and *signification* of those things. As of the *Eternal generation of the Son*, his *Incarnation*, *Crucifixion*, *Ascension*, the *Trinity of Persons*, *Resurrection* and *Glorification* of the *Body*, the *Operations of the Holy Spirit*, &c. They had then no clear and certain

knowledge of the *reality* and *existence* of any of these things afterwards reveal'd in the Gospel, excepting only that of the *Being* of the true God, which was reveal'd to them by *Moses* under the name I AM, which denoted nothing more than his existence.

3. We say that these divine things, which were hidden and obscur'd before the appearing of Christ, were all of them plainly and clearly reveal'd as to their *Existence* and as to the *Relation* they have to us, (*i. e.*) as to the reality and being of these truths, and our concernment in them. And yet they do not cease to be *Mysteries* still, because they are still infinitely more obscur'd as to their *Manner* and *Properties*, than the common objects of nature. So that now it is clearly reveal'd to us that *Christ is the Son of God*, yet it doth not follow that therefore we know as much of the manner of that *Eternal Generation* of the Son, as we doe how one Man is said to be the Son of another. Because it is reveal'd to us that there are endless *Joys in Heaven*, it doth not follow that we know as much of them as we do of *sensual Pleasures*. Because it is clearly reveal'd to us that we shall be rais'd at the last day, in the glorious *likeness* of Christ;

Chriſt; it doth not follow that we know as well what this Glory will be, as we know what it is to be of a *Fair* and *Beautiful Complection*; and ſo in all the reſt.

And this is the reaſon of thoſe ſeemingly oppotſie expreſſions of St. *Paul*, the one in 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. where ſpeaking of the *Clearneſs* of the Goſpel, in oppoſition to the *Obſcurity* of the Law he ſays, *We all with open face beholding as in a Glaſs the glory of the Lord.* And yet in 1 *Cor.* 13. 12. ſpeaking of this ſame *preſent ſtate* of the Goſpel, in oppoſition to our *future ſtate* in Heaven he ſays, *That now we ſee through a Glaſs darkly, but then Face to Face.* By the firſt he denotes the clearneſs of the Revelation as to the *Exiſtence*, and *Deſign* of thoſe things now under the Goſpel: by the latter, he denotes the preſent obſcurity of them, as to their *Manner* and *Properties*.

But it may be objected here that thus they are but *Types* ſtill, and therefore the things contain'd in the Jewiſh Rites and Ceremonies, are as little reveal'd *now*, as they were *before*. But whoſoever makes this Objection can't but know theſe two things to be true which I contend for, however we are able to reconcile them, *viz.* 1. *That thoſe things ſignified by Jewiſh*

Rites and Ceremonies since the coming of Christ are more clearly reveal'd to us than they were before. And 2. *That now they are more clearly reveal'd to us, yet we have no Idea's of the real Nature or Properties of them,* which I have sufficiently prov'd. Whosoever allows these two things, must be of my opinion, whether I were able to answer this objection or no. But it is easy for any one to apprehend, that when I say the *Idea's* we have of the things of another World, are no other than a sort of *Types* or *Figures*, I don't take them in the strictest sense of the Words, as they are applied to Jewish Rites and Ceremonies; which were all of them actions conversant about *external Objects*, and design'd to represent some *divine transaction* which was to have its completion in this life; and even then was to have a farther reference to something intended by it in another World. But my meaning is, that the best notion we can frame of a Divine Object, represents nothing of the real nature of the thing to us as it is in it self; if any one finds fault with the *word*, let them call them by what other name they please, since it is plain they must allow the *thing*.

And now he sees, if he was really blind before, in *what Sense this Veil is remov'd*

mov'd, and in what ſenſe we affirm it to remain. And if he thinks himſelf able to do it, inſtead of proving *operoſely* what no man denies, *that the Veil is taken away in Chriſt*; let him prove the truth of it in that ſenſe which we deny, *viz. That it is taken away, not only as to the Reality, and Exiſtence and Intent, of the things reveal'd* which we allow; but *as to the Manner and Properties of them*, ſo that now we have as perfect a notion and comprehenſive a knowledge of them, as we have of the Manner and Properties of any thing in nature; or in his own cant, *that we have as clear and diſtinct Idea's of them as of any ſenſible Objects.* As for inſtance *Jonah's* being in the Whales belly, was a Type of our Saviours *Burial* and *Reſurrection*, and therefore now this is reveal'd he muſt make it out, that there is nothing more myſterious in our Saviours *Death* and *Reſurrection*, than in a mans being carried into a Vault, and walking out again upon his leggs. The feaſt of the *Paſſover* was a Type of Chriſt, and repreſented the Lords Supper; and this now is but a Type of the joys of Heaven, as our Saviour himſelf makes it by thoſe words, *Henceforth I ſhall not drink of this fruit of the Vine, till I drink it new with you in* Matt. 26. 27.

my Father's Kingdom. But this man muſt ſhew us the real nature of thoſe pleaſures which are here ſignified by *the Fruit of the Vine.*

And now that it appears what he was to have prov'd to ſave me the labour of tranſcribing, do but look over every *Text* he hath quoted by way of *Proof*, and try to make his inference from it, and then you will be ſatisfied that *Quaker*, or any other *Enthuſiaſt* never apply'd Scripture ſo *impertinently.* Do but apply this diſtinction of a thing's being reveal'd as *to it's Exiſtence and Deſign*, and the *Relation* it hath to us only; or *as to the manner and property of the thing it ſelf*, and then the little fallacy will appear which runs through his application of them all. I ſhall only inſtance in the two or three firſt.

P. 90. 1. Cor. 2. 7, 8. *We ſpeak the Wiſdom of God hid in a Myſtery, which God ordain'd before the World for our glory, which none of the Princes of this World knew*, from whence he makes this inference, *viz.* That this divine Wiſdom was then a Myſtery for want of revealing Information. Who denies it? and to confirm this he adds the following words. *Eye hath not ſeen, nor*

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Ear heard, neither have enter'd into the heart of Man the things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him; but God hath reveal'd them to us by his Spirit, which proves no more than what every body owns, *That it was impoſſible by ſtrength of Reaſon to have attain'd to the knowledge of thoſe means, which God had appointed for our Salvation,* and now they are reveal'd it is only as to the truth and reality of their exiſtence, as to their Intent, and the Relation they have to us; and not as to the Manner and Properties of them.

The things here ſpoke of which cou'd not have enter'd into the heart of Man, were the *Incarnation of the Son,* and *the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt*; which were the contrivances of infinite Wiſdom for the reſtoration of fallen Man, and this was what the wiſeſt heads among us cou'd never have thought of. Theſe things were obſcur'd in Jewiſh Types and Ceremonies, and at length God reveal'd it clearly to us, that thoſe were the means he had appointed for our Salvation.

Now the inference this man muſt make, if he wou'd ſpeak to the purpoſe is, *That therefore we now know as perfectly the manner of that conception wrought by the power of the Holy Ghoſt in a pure Virgin, as of the*

ordinary way of Generation; and because it is reveal'd to us that the Holy Ghost works in us, therefore we must know the manner of it as perfectly, as we do that of the nourishment of our Bodies by meat and drink.

2. Cor. 3. 12. 13. The next is, St. *Paul used great plainness of Speech, Ergò* they had as full and perfect a knowledge of every thing he spoke as they had of a Stock or a Stone. Nay when he spoke to them of the *depths of the Wisdom of God*, and discours'd to them how he was *caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words*, without doubt they that heard him had as lively an impression of this whole vision on their imaginations, as he that saw it; nay as they had of the Man that spoke to them; and we may expect no less from this profound *Revealer* of Mysteries, than that he will quote us all these unspeakable words in his next Book.

And so by the following quotations he thinks he hath knock'd us down, when any mention is made of the Mystery being made *manifest* or *known to all Nations*. *Ergo* the very *Manner* and *Properties* of those things are laid open to us. And therefore this Man (I warrant you) knows as much of the secret Councils of God now,

now, whoſe *Judgments are unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out*; as he doth of the dark contrivances of that *Caball* againſt all reveal'd Religion, where the deſign of this Book was firſt laid, and the reſt are now a forging. For 'tis well known this *Myſtery* of *Iniquity* doth already work; *but he who hath hitherto hindred, we truſt will hinder*, till they be *taken out of the way*, and their wickedneſs be reveal'd.

And here if I were diſpos'd to be merry, I cou'd make better ſport with the *Hiſtory* of this Man's Life, than he has done with the *Doctor* and his *Pariſhioner*; Pag. 109. for I have trac'd him in this too, from the time he firſt gave out he wou'd be *Head* of a Sect before he was thirty years of Age, till he became an *Author*; and from thence to his coming into this Kingdom to ſpread his Hereſies, and put his Deſigns in Execution. But I am now upon a *Subject in Divinity*, and not making a *Farce*; and perhaps I may have another opportunity of giving the World a *clear and diſtinct Idea* of this man, who thinks himſelf ſo *formidable*; and ſwells with the fancy of having run down three Kingdoms only with one *croſs Queſtion*, which

which is the foundation of all his Book, *viz. How can a Man believe what he doth not know?*

I come now to consider how he answers those *Objections* which are made against this new *Hypothesis* of his in Religion.

Sect. 3. C. 4. P. 120. The first sort of *Objections* he brings are three or four Texts of Scripture, which make nothing against either what he, or we say in this matter; but such as *Enthusiasts* bring against the use of *Reason in Religion.* So that they are wholly impertinent, unless he disputes against the Quakers; and therefore I have no more to do here but to take notice of the *base disingenuity* of the man, who by this wou'd make *unthinking* or *prejudiced* people believe, that we are those *ignorant perverse Men* he speaks of; and put us upon the same level with the rankest Enthusiasts. Whereas he can't but know that we are as vigorous defenders of the use of Reason in Religion as he can be. 'Tis by this that the truths of all reveal'd Religion are establish'd, and remain unshaken and the same for ever, in spight of all the opposition of their subtilest enemies. 'Tis by this we confute his Errors, 'tis be-

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fore the Evidence and Light of Reaſon that all his *Operoſe* and laborious Sophiſms diſappear like empty ſhadows, and vaniſh into nothing.

When we thus contend for the uſe of Reaſon in *Religion*, then on one ſide we are charg'd as if we deni'd all *Revelation*, and when we defend the truth of *Revelation*, then on the other ſide we are charg'd with laying aſide our *Reaſon*; as if we muſt needs ceaſe to be *Men*, before we can be Chriſtians. And therefore I ſhall ſtate a right notion of this matter as clear as I can in ſhort; and that by theſe degrees.

1. We allow that *Senſe* and *Reaſon* are the only faculties we have of knowing or judging of any thing either in *Nature* or *Religion*; and we allow that God in all his *Revelations* applies himſelf to us by theſe faculties; and doth not either create any *new* ones, or make any eſſential alteration in theſe we have; for then a Stock or a Stone wou'd be as capable of a Divine *Revelation*, as a *Rational Creature*. And therefore,

2. We allow that what is not agreeable to theſe *Powers* of knowledge we are already,

ready endued with, is not to be receiv'd or entertain'd by us; for otherwise God who plac'd these in us, wou'd not be consistent with himself, nor wou'd he have us so.

3. These *Powers* of knowledge are better suited to the present objects of this life than they are to those of another; for otherwise we argue God of want of *Wisdom*, and *Contrivance*, and if they were now as well fitted for the Objects of another life, there wou'd be no occasion for a change at the last day.

4. We affirm that all the things of another World, even after they are *reveal'd* are totally obscur'd both from our *Senses* and our *Reason* as the *real* Nature and Properties of them as they are in themselves. And this I hope I have sufficiently made out; so that if People will believe any thing at all of another life, they must do so without clear and distinct Idea's of them.

5. That since we have not *capacities* for them, there is no other way of revealing any thing to us relating to another life, but by *Analogy* with the things of this World. Thus the *Glory* and *Intellectual* Light of Heaven is reveal'd under the notion of that we have from the *Sun*; the *Ge-*

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neration of the Son of God, under the notion of one Man's proceeding from the Loins of another, &c.

Now therefore let me again distinguish these two things in every *Revelation* or *Mystery*. 1. That *Analogous* object of this life, under the notion of which God doth reveal any thing of another life to us. And 2. The *Thing* it self that is signified by it. As to the first of these it falls in all respects under the severest censure and trial of our Reason, as to the latter it is wholly exempted from it. As for instance in this Proposition,

The Saints shall reign for ever.

In this *Mystery* the thing reveal'd is the happy and glorious state of the Saints in Heaven. The *Analogous* object made use of by God for this, is that of the *Splendour* and *Grandure* of a Kingdom. In respect of this latter, our Reason hath full scope and 'tis not only *lawful* but *commendable*, nay our *duty* to be very punctual and exact in our Scrutiny. And therefore we must know the *meaning* of the words, and understand the *matter* of the Proposition; we must be satisfied that it hath no impossibility or contradiction in it.

it. Nay more, our *Reason* must be convinc'd, and we must have a clear evidence in our mind, of its coming from God by such *Proofs* to Men's *Senses* and *Reason* of its divinity, as shall convince us that it could come from none but God; such as *Miracles* and *Prophecies*, or the agreeableness of the thing to our common *Notions*: and I am not to give my assent to it unless I have this *Evidence*, which I allow thus far to be the ground of Perswasion. Thus far we are ready to joyn issue with any Adversary of *Revelation* and *Mysteries* purely upon the principles of Reason. And to require it any farther is no other than to demand a *rational account* from us, of what we grant we have no notion of.

God never requires our *Assent* to any Proposition, but upon such testimonies and proof as shall cause this Evidence. But as to the thing it self which is signified by this analogy, as the *real state* and condition of the blest in Heaven is in this Mystery, it is wholly exempted from the enquiry of *Reason*. And herein is my *Faith* that I give my assent to a proposition which is sufficiently prov'd to come from God, though I have no notion at all of that divine truth which is represented to

me

me under the *ſimilitude* of ſome worldly Object.

And thus you ſee how *Faith* is nicely and moſt exactly defin'd. The Evidence, or ἔλεγχος demonſtration of things not ſeen, becauſe *Faith* is no ſuch *precarious implicite* aſſent, as theſe Champions for Reaſon think, but it is the giving our *aſſent* to things which though we have no notion at all of now, yet the *reality* and *exiſtence* of them are demonſtrated to us by ſuch proofs as raiſe up in our minds the greateſt degree of Evidence for the truth of the Relation. And it is this that will ſtrike all theſe Oppoſers of *Faith* and *Revelation* dumb, when they appear at the Tribunal of God; becauſe they will not then have it to ſay, That God requir'd their aſſent to any propoſition, but what they underſtood as well as they could underſtand any thing in this World. And for the *Divine Revelation* of which, they had ſufficient proofs (if they did but conſider them) to raiſe up in their minds an *Evidence* as clear and diſtinct as they can have of any thing in this World.

And thus he ſees how groundleſs all thoſe Objections are, and malicious Inſi-

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nuations against us and our most holy *Faith*; as if we in any point of it declin'd the strictest examination of Reason. We are so far from distrusting our cause, or obliging Men to walk blindfold, that we give their *Reason* all the helps we can; and Men are never better dispos'd for the belief of our *Christian Mysteries* than when they follow the guidance and conduct of it. For our whole Christian Faith is grounded upon the *strictest Ratiocination*.

And therefore having stated the true extent of *Reason* in the Mysteries of Religion, I shall now proceed to consider his
P. 126. *Friend's* objection against his Book, *viz. That it destroys the nature of* FAITH. A shrewd objection it is, and that which he never will evade, though he had the wisdom of the old Serpent to help him. And that person whosoever he was wou'd have been more his *Friend*, if he had in time opened to him all the other false and impious consequences of his Book; before it came abroad to *spread infection*, and *blast* the credit of the Christian *Faith*. But now alas! it is too late, for nothing is so vain as a Man of some *parts*, where there is not a true sense of Piety to qualifie

lifie them: And therefore he is now to ſtand by it with his *Soul*, and venture *Damnation* rather than leſſen himſelf by a publick *Recantation*, in the opinion of a *half learned* and *debauch'd* ſort of people, whoſe intereſt it is to run down that *Inſtitution*, which if it be true muſt riſe up in judgment againſt them at the laſt day. P. 126.

The force of the objection lies in this. If we can give our aſſent to nothing but what we have a clear and diſtinct Idea in the Mind, ſo as to believe nothing upon the *Worth* and *Veracity* of another perſon, then there can be no *Aſſent* diſtinct from *Knowledge*; and thus there can be no *Faith* either *Divine* or *Humane*. For if a Man of whoſe ſincerity you are throughly convinc'd, ſhou'd tell you, *That there are a ſort of people in the Indies, who ſcourge their Idols ſeverely, when any thing goes croſs to their expectations*, it is impoſſible for you to believe this unleſs you ſee it. For though you know the meaning of the words, and apprehend clearly what an Idol is, and what it is to ſcourge it; yet if the relations of ten thouſand People, and ever ſo many circumſtances concurr'd to the truth of it, yet you

can never give your assent to it upon any other terms than he did who saw it, for nothing else can give you this evidence or knowledge of the truth and reality of it, which he makes the only ground of our perswasion.

And then if we can't give our assent even to the Reality and Existence of any thing, but when we have clear and distinct Idea's of the *real modes* and *properties of it as it is in its self*, then we can believe nothing either of God or of any thing relating to another World; For I have made it sufficiently appear that it is utterly impossible for us now to have such Idea's of them. Therefore now let us see how he endeavours to get over this. My *Reader* thinks, I warrant, that he is going about to reconcile the *Christian Faith* with his *Principles*. But instead of this, he spends sixteen pages in shewing you there is no such thing as Faith; as you will see plainly. I shall take him in order, and answer every Paragraph, because this is the most plausible part of his Sophistry.

P. 127. First he tell's us that to be confident of any thing without conceiving it, is no

Real

Real Faith or *Perſwaſion*; but a raſh *Preſumption*, and an obſtinate *Prejudice*.

If he means by not conceiving it, *not underſtanding the meaning of the Propoſition reveal'd*, he is in the right of it; but if he means by conceiving it *the having as full and compleat a knowledge of the thing reveal'd, as we have of any Phænomena of nature*, 'tis abſolutely falſe; for as I have ſhewn at large, we may give our aſſent to the *Exiſtence* of things when we can't conceive any thing at all of their *real nature*: And that our *Chriſtian Faith* is however no *raſh Preſumption* or *obſtinate Prejudice*, becauſe it is founded upon ſufficient teſtimonies of the truth and reality of the propoſitions believ'd, in things whereof we have clear and diſtinct Idea's.

This is the thing he drives at, *viz.* that we have a full and compleat knowledge of the things believ'd; and to make it plauſible, he ſays that God hath no intereſt to *delude* his Creatures, nor wants ability to inform them. *Ergo* he reveals nothing but what he makes them perfectly *comprehend*. Therefore he hath not reveal'd any thing of the eternal *Generation* of the Son, the *change* of our Bodies, the *Joys* of Heaven, of the *operations* of the Spirit,

&c. becauſe if God had reveal'd them, he wou'd have made you conceive the manner of all theſe perfectly; and if he did not, it was certainly want of ſincerity or ability in him. But let this *Blaſphemer* know, that it is neither want of *Veracity*, nor ability in God that is the reaſon why we don't conceive theſe things, but the *Weakneſs* and *Imperfection* of our preſent *ſtate*, who have no capacities for them as yet. And therefore as we now give our aſſent to the Reality and Exiſtence of what we can't conceive, upon that veracity of God which he hath thus endeavour'd to rob of all it's Authority, and Influence upon our aſſent; ſo God will one day manifeſt his *Power*, in bringing all thoſe things to paſs, which we can't now conceive; and will ſo enlarge our Souls that we ſhall clearly apprehend them, and all the Objects of another World. He proceeds and ſays that.

P. 128. *God wou'd loſe his end if what he ſaid did not agree with our common notions* (*i. e.*) If God ſhou'd ſpeak *Nonſenſe* to you in his *Revelations* you wou'd be never the wiſer; for if he ſhould reveal to you that a thing call'd *BLICTRI* had a being in nature, and not inform you what this *Blictri* was, you could

could not believe it. Now this very inſtance which he intends by way of *Ridicule* of all the Objects of our holy *Faith*, doth happily ſhew the true difference between a *rational Aſſent* and a *blind Credulity*; and is a ſufficient confutation of his whole Book. Let us therefore compare theſe two words *BLICTRI*, and *GLORI*.

Of the firſt I know nothing more than that it is made up of ſeven Letters, and therefore he that ſpeaks it is a *Barbarian* to me. And as I know nothing of it, ſo I can believe nothing concerning it, but the uncertain ſound it makes to my ear; and that ſeven Letters make two Syllables in writing.

As to the other word *Glory*, I grant I know as little of the real nature of the Glory of God, and of the Saints in Heaven, as I do what that *Blictri* means; and yet God doth not ſpeak *Nonſenſe*, when he reveals to me that there is ſuch a thing in Heaven as Glory. For 1ſt. Though I have no notion of the thing as it is in it ſelf, yet it is repreſented to me by the brightneſs of the Sun, and Glory of a Kingdom, the greateſt Images I now am able to frame of it. 2. I am made acquainted with the *Relation* this *Glory* hath

to me, *viz. That it expects me in the Heavens*; that I ſhall enjoy it, and be made partaker of it; and that it will render me happy beyond all imagination. But I am no more able to conceive that Happineſs, than that Glory of God which ſhall be the cauſe of it. And 3. It is reveal'd by God with this deſign that it ſhou'd be a prevailing motive of my Obedience, and an incitement to the practice of Vertue and Holineſs. 4. I have not capacities at preſent to apprehend the real nature of it as perfectly as I can apprehend any thing in nature if it were diſcovered to me. And thus we ſee how God in all his Revelations doth not ſpeak *Nonſenſe* to us, though we have not clear and diſtinct Idea's of the things which are reveal'd. Nay though we have no more Idea of them as they are in themſelves, than we have of what *Blictri* is.

P. 129. Beſides the Text he brings to back this Sophiſm of his, explains the matter farther and lays open the Fallacy, *Heb.* 11. 6. *He that comes to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* By which we ſee all that is knowable of God by us now is his *Exiſtence*, and the Relation he

he hath to us, *viz. That he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* For I hope he will own that we are bound to believe all we know of God, though he flatly denies that we are bound to believe any thing more in him than what we know, as well at leaſt as we do any thing elſe.

He goes on and asks, *without conceiving Faith after this manner,* (*i. e.*) without making it nothing elſe but knowledge, *How could Chriſt be term'd the light of the World? and how could we be ſaid to have the Spirit of Wiſdom?* (*i. e.*) unleſs he gives you as clear and diſtinct Idea's of every thing he reveals, as you have of a Stock or a Stone. I anſwer by giving us a clear and diſtinct Revelation of their *Exiſtence,* of which we ſhould have been wholly ignorant but for him, for thus he hath made us wiſe unto Salvation, ſince he hath given us a clear *Knowledge* of our Duty, and back'd his *Precepts* with the promiſe of future rewards, which we have no notion of; and the beſt thought we can frame of them is, that they exceed all that we can think or ſpeak. P. 130.

But ſays he, *That remarkable inſtance of Abraham's Faith will be objected.* Yes P. 131.

'tis obected, and the way he answers it, is by saying as we do, and leaving his own Opinion to shift for it self. God promised *Abraham* to give him a numerous Progeny in *Isaac*; after this, before *Isaac* hath a Child, God commands him to sacrifice his only Son; He obeys upon this consideration, that God was able to raise him up again, by the same power that he at first rais'd him out of the *deadness* of *Sarah's* Womb. Now the question between him and me, is not *Whether this*
P. 132: *Faith was a firm Perswasion built upon substantial Reasons*, which we allow and contend for, and therefore he says nothing to the purpose. But the question is, *Whether Abraham gave his assent to what he was not able to comprehend*, which he must own; unless he proves that *Abraham* knew as perfectly the whole manner of God's raising a Body from the dead, or from a Womb past Child bearing, as he did the procreation of it in the ordinary way of Nature. Had *Abraham* been able to *demonstrate* that God wou'd raise his Son, and to conceive exactly the manner how this was to be brought to pass, then indeed it were no *Faith* but Knowledge; but instead of this he had only the promise of God for it; and knew no more how

God

God wou'd *raiſe* him, than he knew how he *made* the *World.*

After this he lays down ſeveral *Obſervations* to prove there can be no ſuch thing as *Faith*, (*i. e.*) an aſſent diſtinct from Knowledge. P. 133.

1. *If Faith were not a Perſwaſion reſulting from a comprehenſion of the thing believ'd, there could be no degrees in it.* I anſwer this is falſe like all the reſt, for though I know nothing more of a thing than it's *Exiſtence*, and the Relation it hath to me, and therefore am far from *comprehending* it; Yet my *aſſent* to the truth of it, ſhall vary in degrees either according to the Proofs I have for it, or according as I *weigh* and *conſider* them.

2. *The Subject of Faith muſt be intelligible to all, ſince the belief thereof is commanded under no leſs a penalty than Damnation.* Who doubts it? let him if he can produce one propoſition we *believe* which is not intelligible. But becauſe we don't fully comprehend the thing ſpoke of, are we therefore wholly ignorant of any thing relating to it, and muſt we reject it all as Fallacy and Impoſture? If it be ſaid *He that believeth not ſhall be damn'd, Mark* 16. 16. then what will become of him P. 134.

him that takes all this pains to shew there is no such thing as Faith? Especially since the Belief there mean't is something plainly distinct from Knowledge. For sure he doth not think the meaning of that Text is this, *He that hath not as full and comprehensive a knowledge of God and the things reveal'd, as he hath of any thing in Nature, shall be Damn'd,* which is all his notion of Faith. Again,

P. 135. 3. *If any part of Scripture were unintelligible it could never be rightly translated.* A very wise Observation, who ever question'd it? But as I have shewn there is a great deal of difference between *understanding the meaning of the words,* and, *having a comprehensive knowledge of the thing intended by them.* As I understand very well the meaning of these words, *When Christ appears we shall be like him,* though I am wholly ignorant wherein this likeness will consist; so that I can however translate the sense of that Proposition exactly and perfectly. *And therefore 'tis such Wretches as He who affirm the contrary, that plentifully furnish the Atheistical and Prophane, with all the matter of their objections against Scripture. But I hope in*

time

time God will put it into the hearts of our Governours to remedy theſe diſorders.

4. *Except Faith ſignifies an intelligible Perſwaſion, we cannot give others a reaſon of our Hope.* P. 136. 'Tis very true, it is an *Intelligible Perſwaſion*, and grounded upon the *ſtricteſt Reaſon*. But he with a hardy confidence openly pretends, that we deny people are to examine and underſtand their *Faith*; and ſo runs into a compariſon between *Chriſt* and the *Idol* of the *Siameſes* upon our Principles. Now he is paſt all *Reaſon* and *Modeſty*, and therefore I have no more to do here but deliver him up into the hands of our *Governours*, We may confute his Errors, but 'tis They only can ſuppreſs his Inſolence; We only can endeavour to heal thoſe who are already *Infected*, 'tis They alone can hinder the *Infection* from ſpreading farther.

5. *That either the Apoſtles cou'd not write more intelligibly of the reputed Myſteries, or they would not.* P. 137. I anſwer that all that we are able to underſtand of theſe *Real Myſteries* they have made ſo plain, that they could not, neither need they have made them more plain and intelligible,

gible. As for the other part of them, they knew as little of it as we do; and therefore we don't *Rail* at them as he doth at all the Clergy, as if they had induſtriouſly conceal'd any thing from us which they knew themſelves.

He goes on, *'Tis affirm'd that God hath a right to require the aſſent of his Creatures to what they can't comprehend.* Yes he has, and accordingly doth require it. And again I ſay 'tis *Blaſphemy* to affirm that in this he is guilty of ſuch a *Tyranny* as only becomes the Devil. He requires our aſſent to the *Eternal generation of the Son*; the *Trinity of Perſons*, and *Divinity of Chriſt*; the *Reſurrection of our Bodies, and change of them into the likeneſs of Chriſt*, &c. though we can't comprehend them. And yet he is ſo far from acting like a *Tyrant* in this, that he acts like a *merciful God*, and a tender *Father*. For he herein condeſcends to our capacities, and *Reveals* the methods of our Salvation, and the future ſtate of Heaven to us, after ſuch a manner as we are able to underſtand them; and promiſeth that if they have that influence upon us which he deſigns, (*i. e.*) to excite our *Gratitude*, and make us *Vertuous* and *Holy*; he will at the reſurrection of our bodies, give us capacities to

ſee

ſee them clearly as they are in themſelves. So that theſe Myſteries *are to be underſtood at laſt*, but not till we come to another World. And therefore God doth not reveal them only to *puzzle our heads*, but P. 138. for wiſe and excellent ends, *viz.* to bring mankind to ſalvation by ſuch *Methods*, as are conſiſtent with the *Freedom* of his nature.

From all theſe *Obſervations* he con- P. 139. cludes, *That to give our Aſſent to any thing above Reaſon in his Senſe is contradictory. 1. To the ends of Religion*, whereas I have ſhewn at large that upon this ſuppoſition, there can be no Religion at all either natural or reveal'd. 2. *To the nature of Man*, (*i. e.*) becauſe no Man can believe what he knows nothing of, but this Quibble I have ſufficiently remov'd. And, 3. *To the goodneſs and wiſdom of God*, who as he intimated before, *is as much a Tyrant as the Devil for requiring us to believe any thing we can't comprehend.*

If God had requir'd us to give our aſſent to what we knew nothing at all of, he would have requir'd *Impoſſibilities*; if he had requir'd us to give our aſſent to what we had no *Proof* or *Evidence* for, he wou'd have requir'd what was *Unreaſonable*; but when he adapts the Revelation

of

of things which we *cannot apprehend* to our Capacities, under the notions of things which we *do apprehend clearly and fully*, it is the greatest Argument of his Wisdom. And when he requires no assent from us without sufficient *Arguments* of Conviction to any considering unprejudic'd Person. It is a great instance of his *Goodness*. And these Revelations of things above our Reason to comprehend, as they are most powerful incitements to *Gratitude* here; so they will be the subject of our *Praise* and *Thanksgiving* hereafter, when the Veil is perfectly remov'd, and that we are enabled to apprehend them clearly.

P. 139. Now after all this pains to shew that there is no such thing as *Faith* distinct from *Knowledge*. He says this will be objected against him. He is in the right of it, this will be ever objected against him, till he recants his Error publickly.

But how doth he endeavour to evade it? Why, *That Knowledge which is the present and immediate view of a thing is not Faith.* He says well. But what is.

Faith is only the understanding what is believ'd. He will *stand by it* with Soul and Body that Faith is nothing else. That the

the underſtanding what is believ'd is neceſſary in order to Faith no one denies; but any Man of common Senſe may ſee, that this and the other definition are the ſame; for pray what is Underſtanding *what is believ'd*, but having a preſent *immediate knowledge of it*, unleſs he will ſay a Man can't believe a thing till he hath forgot he knew it. That which conſtitutes the formal act of *Faith* as it is diſtinct from Knowledge, is an *Aſſent upon the Authority of another Perſon.* But according to him Authority is no ground of Perſwaſion, and Faith is only the underſtanding what is believ'd. Therefore there can be no ſuch thing as any *Aſſent* diſtinct from *Knowledge.*

And now have I done this Man any *Wrong*, by charging him with endeavouring to *deſtroy* the *Faith* of the Goſpel, and to overthrow the whole *Chriſtian Religion.* In the face of a Chriſtian Government, and in *Defiance* of all Laws and Power *Eccleſiaſtical* and *Civil*; He tells them plainly that *Faith* is nothing more than underſtanding what is believ'd (*i. e.*) there is no ſuch thing as Faith diſtinct from Knowledge; and conſequently the *Faith* of Chriſtians is nothing but *Implicite* Aſſent and blind *Credulity.*

And

And therefore here again I wou'd deliver him into the hands of the Magistrate, not mov'd by any heat of Passion, but by such a *Zeal* as becomes every Christian to have for his *Religion*.

P. 110. For here he pleads a *Toleration*, but for what? I hope there is no Toleration for Blasphemy and Prophaneness; and though Men are allow'd to believe what they please themselves, yet sure they may be restrain'd from industriously spreading such Impious Notions as are destructive of all *Religion*, and from openly reviling the Christian Faith as *Imposture* and *Implicite blind Credulity*.

P. 140. Again, 'tis objected against him *That his notions of Faith make Revelation useless*. Yes it doth, for though we understand the *Words* of the Proposition reveal'd ever so well, and comprehend the thing spoke of as fully as we do a Stock or a Stone; yet we can never give our assent to the truth of the *Relation*; because that after all is done we must take this upon the Word of another. But much more doth it make all the *Revelations* of the Gospel *useless*, because we have no clear and distinct Idea's of them, and therefore must utterly reject them all upon this score likewise.

But

But in oppoſition to all that can be ſaid, this *Poſitive Man* aſſerts here, what he hath been *Aſſerting* from the beginning of his Book, but gives no reaſon for; *That Revelation is only of uſe to inform us, whilſt the Evidence of it's Subject perſwades us. Then reply we,* if ſo, you muſt believe all Relations true or falſe indifferently, when you underſtand the meaning of the Words, and know the nature of the thing ſpoken of. Nay if two contrary Propoſitions equally intelligible be related he muſt believe them both.

And therefore now I hope he won't take it ill of the World, if they believe me when I inform them, that this Book which goes under his name, was the *joynt Endeavours* of a ſecret Club, who ſet themſelves with a great deal of Induſtry to deſtroy all *Reveal'd Religion.* And that they have made uſe of this Man as a *Tool* only, and have puſh't him before them, to try with what ſafety ſuch *Principles* as theſe may be openly avow'd in oppoſition to all that is eſtabliſh't among us; that they might follow and openly maintain what they have been forging in ſecret Cabals.

Now this is a matter of Fact, and whoſoever reads this muſt believe it, becauſe they underſtand the meaning of the Words, and know the nature of every thing that is ſpoke of in them; *for Faith*
P. 139. *is nothing elſe but underſtanding what is believ'd*, and if they underſtand what is ſpoke of, they muſt bow before the Light and Majeſty of this knowledge. And therefore I hope he will never contradict me in this or any thing elſe I relate of him; for if he ſays the contrary, then either the World muſt believe us both when we relate two contrary Propoſitions, or they muſt be ſway'd one way or the other by his *Authority* or *Mine*; and whether they believe him or me it will ſufficiently confute him, for it will ſhew that Authority may be a ground of Perſwaſion as well as a means of Information. If they believe neither of us, then it will appear they are not under ſuch a neceſſity of bowing before the Light and Majeſty of that *Evidence* he contends for in all relations.

The laſt Objection he raiſes againſt this Principle of his, is that Paſſage, 1 *Pet.* 2. 12. Where there is this Expreſſion,

Which

Which things the Angels deſire to look into. The things ſpoken of here are the methods of our Salvation by the *Incarnation* of the Son of God, and *Deſcent* of the Holy Ghoſt, and 'tis ſaid in the *time preſent* that the Angels *Deſire* to look into them. And I think it a natural inference from hence, that theſe things yet are Myſteries even to them in a great degree; which we need not much wonder at when they don't ſo much as know when the day of *Judgment* will be, and therefore we may the leſs wonder they are Myſteries to us.

But we will ſuppoſe that this Expreſſion is mean't of the time paſt. And then let me ask him theſe two Queſtions concerning it.

1. Whether the Angels did believe thoſe things they are ſaid to enquire into, or no? if they did believe them, then we find 'tis very poſſible to believe things that we can't comprehend; for if the Angels underſtood them fully when they believ'd, why ſhou'd they deſire to ſearch into them?

2. Whether, now these things are come to pass, he will assert that we have as full and comprehensive a knowledge of them all as the Angels have. If we have not, then we may believe things we do not comprehend. If we have then there is no difference between ours and the state of the Blest in Heaven, at least in respect of knowledge.

C. 5. P. 144. The last *Objection* he brings against his own Principles is *That which is drawn from the consideration of Miracles.* And this likewise is so strong an objection against him, that the very supposition of one true Miracle wrought in confirmation of any point of Doctrine, quite overthrows his whole Book. For

1. The *thing it self* is in a great degree *Mysterious*, and therefore if he will allow these things related of our Saviour to be true Miracles, he must allow there are Mysteries in Christianity. But he endeavours to evade this by the same *Quibble* P. 145. he did the Doctrines of the Gospel being Mysterious, *viz.* be saying the miraculous action must by something in it self *Intelligible* and *Possible.* Who denies it? but

but it is however Myſterious ſtill. And to lay open this Fallacy we muſt diſtinguiſh the two things that are to be conſider'd in every Miracle. And 1. The *ſubſtance of the thing perform'd* we grant muſt be very Intelligible and Poſſible, for as he ſays *Contradiction is only another word for Impoſſible or nothing.* 2. The *manner* of performing it, which is totally obſcur'd from us, and lies out of the reach of all our Capacities. As to inſtance in that Miracle of our Saviour's *Feeding five thouſand People with five Loaves.* We underſtand very well what it is, for a great number of men to eat and be ſatisfied; and what it is for a ſmall quantity of Bread to be encreas'd to a mighty bulk: but as to the manner how this was perform'd, we are wholly ignorant of it, though we know well how Corn is encreas'd in the ordinary way of nature.

But he will object here as he did concerning the *Doctrines*, viz. That at this rate *All the Phænomena of Nature* are miraculous, for we know not the true manner of any one of them. And this is the main drift of this Chapter, to give us a wrong notion of a *Miracle*, viz. That it is nothing more than the dextrous ma- P. 150.

nagement of second causes, and not any immediate effect of Almighty God; and therefore in the close he tells us, *That Miracles are wrought according to the laws of Nature, though above it's ordinary operations, which are therefore supernaturally assisted.* And this is the reason of that bold and arrogant expression of his, *That could he tell how a Miracle was wrought, he believes he might do as much himself.* For there is nothing more in it than in a Chymical Operation, and if he were *Philosopher* enough, he would work any Miracle of them all.

But the true notion of a *Miracle* is, that it is *An operation wrought by the immediate power of God, not by Assisting only, but Over-ruling the laws of Nature*; not only by *hastning* and *accelerating* its Operations, but sometimes by an instantaneous production, of what was never to be effected by the united force of all natural causes. As to instance in the *Raising a Body from the Dead*, all the united force of nature with the most dextrous management, wou'd not be able to effect this; all the *Extracting, Mollifying, Mixing, Infusing, Consolidating*, &c. *And the ministry not only of Thousands but of Millions at once*

wou'd

wou'd not be able to unite a Soul and Body again, when once they are separated: nothing less than the Almighty immediate act of God is able to effect this, and that without the concurrence of any natural cause.

Again there are some *Miraculous Operations* which are so far from being *according* to the laws of nature, that they are *contrary* to them. As that of the Sun's going back or standing still, all the laws of nature are dispos'd for it's motion, or at least for the motion of our Earth which makes it seem to us to move.

Again, *The making Iron to swim*: Were this effect produc'd by Mollifying, Consolidating, &c. or any Operation which shou'd convert the substance of *Iron* into that of Wood, then we could not say that Iron swam, but something else; or if the water were condensed to support it, then it wou'd be *Ice* and not *water*; and if any thing of this nature were done of a sudden it wou'd however be miraculous, but not contrary to nature. But for a *solid* piece of *Iron* while it remains such, to swim in Water no way condens'd, this 2. *Kings* 6. 6.

is not only above but contrary to the laws of nature.

And so likewise for *Fire* not to burn, is contrary to nature. Indeed if there were nothing more in it than what this Man supposes, that it is done *by repelling the Heat, and keeping off the Flames*, then
P. 135. it might be *according* to the Laws of Nature, and there are many things which by an instantaneous application might extinguish the Fire. But to hinder Fire from burning while it remains such, and combustible matter actually in it, this is contrary to the laws of nature.

But all those Miracles which are not so directly *contrary* to nature, can't however be said to be according to the laws of nature. And I take these two expressions to be directly opposite. Which he makes the same, *Miracles are according to the laws of nature.* And, *they are above the operations of it.* For to instance in the first Miracle our Saviour wrought, that of Turning *Water* into *Wine.* The production of Wine according to the laws of nature, must have been by accelerating the growth of the *Vine*, and ripening the Grape suddenly, by application of all those things

things in nature which could forward it: but to turn Water immediately into Wine, without any of these methods, was to produce it after a manner wholly different from all the laws of nature.

Upon his Principles we have no way, from the nature of the thing, of distinguishing between the *Delusions* of the Devil, those *celebrated Feats of Goblins, and Witches, and Conjurers which* he speaks of; and those which are wrought by the *Finger* of God. For without doubt the Devil is a great *Philosopher*, and can manage second Causes, so as to produce Effects according to the laws of nature, which shall appear very strange to us. But we are sure nothing less than that power which is the Author of Nature, can work any real effect contrary to it, or above it. The Devil indeed may delude mens senses, so as to make them think that *Real* which is only an Appearance; as it is likely he did to mimick that miracle of turning *Aaron's Rod* into a *Serpent*; for that of the Magicians was not a real Conversion, but effected by their Enchantments, or as 'tis in the original by their *Wiles* and *Jugling*. For we find when they endeavour'd to imitate *Moses*, P. 147.

in

in the instantaneous production of any real thing with *Life*, there the Divel fail'd them, and they were forc'd to own it was the Finger of God.

And thus we see plainly, how this Man strikes at the foundation of all *Reveal'd Religion*, by undermining one of the main *Pillars* on which the Faith and Credit of it is founded. You see his drift all along in every thing he says, is to take away all *Operations* above the Laws of *Nature*, and all *Doctrines* above the reach of *Reason*; and then all the Religion of Men is consequently resolv'd into *Infidelity*, and *Heathenism*. So that any one who wishes *Christianity* to be true, must hope at least that this Mans Principles are false, since they are so utterly inconsistent.

1. But Secondly, As miracles being in a great degree Mysterious is an unanswerable objection against him; so they are altogether useless and impertinent upon his Principles. He owns *that God does not work them at random, but for some end*, P. 146. and this end he owns *is for the confirmation of some Divine Doctrine*. P. 150. But why for the confirmation of a Doctrine? for he hath told us over and over, that it is only the

Evidence

Evidence or immediate knowledge of the Doctrine it self can perswade us. That Faith is nothing more than the knowing what is believ'd, &c. And therefore all *Miracles* for the confirmation of any Doctrine are *needless* and *superfluous.* If they are as evident to our *Senses* or our *Reason* that we know them to be true, what necessity is there of farther conviction? if a thing be so evident to my Senses or Reason that I know it to be true, nothing can make me surer of it.

So that we see the reason of Miracles is, that they may be a proof of something that we cannot comprehend.

But it may be objected here that at this rate, if both the *Doctrines* and Miracles are mysterious, *Then you prove one Mystery by another.* I answer that they are not *equally mysterious*, for a mysterious Doctrine is *totally* obscur'd from us, both as to the *manner* and *substance* of the thing signified, as it is in it self. But in a Miracle the *substance* of the thing is obvious and intelligible, and the *manner* only of the operation is conceal'd. And therefore in so doing, that which is *more* mysterious is prov'd by that which is *less* so.

But

P. 150. But this *Blunderer* will tell you, that the *Doctrines* themselves are very knowable in all respects, but *Miracles* are wholly obscur'd as to the manner of them; And yet in the same breath Own, that these obscure *Miracles*, are for confirmation of these plain *Doctrines*. This is another piece of his Logick, to prove *Notum per Ignotius*.

He can't say that though the *Doctrines* are plain, yet that they came from God is not so; and therefore *Miracles* were to assure us of this. For if the knowing they come from God makes us give our assent to them, then *Authority* is a ground of Perswasion. And besides if they have that *Evidence* of their truth in themselves, which he contends for, let them come from whence they will we must give our assent to them.

Sect. 3. C. 4. P. 151. And now I am come to his last Chapter, wherein he pretends to give an account *When, Why* and *by Whom Mysteries were brought into Christianity*. There is not here so much as a pretence of reasoning, but several vile *Insinuations* against all the *Primitive Christians*, against the *Clergy* of all Ages, and against *Christianity*

nity it self, making it as it is now profest only a sort of *Heathenism*, and the Ministers of it in all respects no better than *Pagan Priests*.

By the Title of this Chapter he was to have shewn how these Mysteries came into Christianity, but instead of this (of which he says not a word) he talks in general how some *Ceremonies* were introduc'd, and some *Doctrines* abus'd to Superstition. The dispute all along was about *Mysteries*, and now it is turn'd to *Ceremonies*; of which he speaks too after a confused manner, making no difference between the *Orthodox* and *Heretical* Professors, but charging all the Mistakes and Errors of every Sect indifferently, upon the whole body of Christians in the general. That Miscarriages and Errors crept in, and that the Christian Religion was corrupted and abus'd by many in the Primitive times to Superstition is without all doubt; it is so now, and is like to be so to the end of the World, for *it must needs be that Offences come.* But what is all this to those who are not guilty of these things? Suppose every thing in this Chapter true, what is all this to us? who in the Celebration of *Baptism* and the *Supper*,

Supper, have rejected all these numerous Rites and Superstitious Ceremonies which he speaks of.

As for those Ceremonies retain'd by us, it is time enough to defend them when he says any thing against them; and proves, either that *the Worship of God and Celebration of the Sacraments can be perform'd without any Ceremonies.* Or, *That these which we have retain'd are unlawful.*

All he wou'd insinuate here of them, is, that they were in use among the Heathens; and the force of what he says, if it hath any, is this. Heathens us'd a *White Garment* in their Idolatrous Worship, they had certain *Times* and *Places*, and *Persons*, and *Actions*, appropriated to the Worship of their Idols; therefore 'tis unlawful to have any thing of this nature in the Worship of the true God.

P. 157. The Heathens us'd Washings, *Ergò*, *Baptism* is unlawful. The Heathens used *Eating* and *Drinking* in honour of their Gods, *Ergò*, the Eating and Drinking in remembrance of Christ is Superstitious. And thus by a direct and immediate consequence

sequence he destroys the Doctrine of the *Sacraments*. Let him if he can, shew what else can possibly be inferred from all this ridiculous incoherent stuff.

What he would insinuate here concerning the *Sacraments*, is, that by a multitude of Ceremonies, we obscure the nature of them, we make them *Mysterious*, and do not Celebrate them with that simplicity they were at first instituted. But let him in his next Book shew, what it is that we know our selves concerning the Sacraments, which we conceal from the People. In short, let him make out that he hath any other drift in this whole Chapter, than to shew that there is no difference between *Christianity* and *Heathenism*.

All this is by way of *Amusement* to People who do not know when a Man speaks to the purpose; *Ceremonies* are not *Mysteries*, nor do they make a thing *Mysterious*. Those things which we call Mysteries, are the *Nature* and *Attributes* of God; the *Eternal Generation* and *Incarnation of the Son*, and *Procession of the Holy Ghost*; The *Union* of the *Divine and Human Natures in Christ*; the *Resurrection of*

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our Bodies; the *Operations* and *Influences* of the Holy Spirit of God upon ours; the *Trinity of Persons* in the Godhead; the *Glory* and *Felicity* of the Saints in Heaven; The *Solemnity* of the last Judgment, *&c.* These are the Mysterious Doctrines of our Religion. Let him shew us *When*, *Why*, and *by Whom* these *reputed Mysteries*, as he calls them, were brought into Christianity. For we affirm that they were brought into Christianity by *Christ himself*; who alone was able to reveal them. That they came in at the first publication of the Gospel; and with design to make us *wise unto Salvation*;
P. 120. and therefore *we own our selves so fond of them*, that we will hazard any thing, *Life* and all rather than part with them.

And thus I have gone through his Book, and answered every thing that look'd like *Reasoning* in it. If he will shew me where I have overlook'd any thing that hath the appearance of an Argument; or where my *Answer* fails, I will promise him not to let it pass. And if any are offended with my manner of treating him, I doubt not but they will be satisfied if they but consider what St. *Paul* said to *Elymas* the

the Sorcerer upon a like occasion, *O full of all Subtilty and all Mischief, thou Child of the Devil, thou Enemy of all Righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?* Acts 13. 10.

In the next Book he speaks of, he has two things to perform.

1. To shew that we are not oblig'd by Scripture, to believe that there is any thing, in any point of the Christian Faith, which we do not comprehend as fully and perfectly, as we do the common Objects of this World.

2. To discover to all the World those secrets in Religion, which the Clergy have industriously conceal'd from the Laity, under the notion of *Mysteries*, and make them so plain that they shall cease to be such; so that every one of them shall be as wise as e're a Priest of us all. And indeed, he is much to blame that defers it all this while; He that pretends so much Zeal and Concern for the *Vulgar*, shou'd not let them remain so long in Ignorance, to be thus miserably impos'd upon, by the craft and cunning of their Priests.

What *strange unheard of Design* this Man has in that second Book, which is now a forging, is hard to tell. For by it he is to inform the World of things they never *heard* or *thought* of; He is to reveal to us more than ever *Jesus Christ* hath done; and what never yet cou'd enter into the Heart of Man to think, or into his imagination to frame any true and *proper* notion of. If the World had any opinion of his Abilities to perform what he pretends with this *hardy Confidence*, we shou'd all of us expect this *wonderful Book* with much impatience. Certainly, by all these promises of so much New Light to the World, which hath liv'd in Darkness so many hundred Years, we can't guess he designs to be no more than Head of an ordinary Sect, but to be as famous an Impostor as *Mahomet*. He hath laid a fair foundation for it, for he aver's positively in one place, *That if he knew the way how a Miracle was wrought, he wou'd work it himself.* And again, he openly says, *That nothing related in the Gospel is Mysterious, either as to the Manner or Substance of the thing*, and therefore 'tis not unlikely that we shall have this Man shortly confirming his Doctrines with Miracles.

For

For my part, I can't imagine how he will go about what he hath undertaken; however, thus much I dare venture to promiſe him, that whenever any thing is built upon that Rotten Foundation which is here laid, by the *Grace of God* I will pull it down.

When this Book of his comes out (which after all will tell us no more concerning theſe Myſteries, than what we have heard an *hundred times over*; but by what he promiſes muſt take place of the *Bible* it ſelf, which gives us no ſuch clear and diſtinct Idea's of the things of another World.) Then we ſhall give a better gueſs at the deſign of the Man. In the mean time, I ſhall only ſay a little more concerning the *Pretended*, and the *Real Drift* of this Book. And, P. 150

1. The *Pretended Drift* of it is, *To free the Chriſtian Religion from that Darkneſs and Obſcurity, in which it is involv'd by the Contrivance of its Preachers, only to gain a Reputation to their Perſons and Profeſſion; and to make it ſuch a Religion as God deſign'd it,* (i. e.) a *Religion for all Men.* But how doth he go about this? By *ſcraps of Metaphyſical Abſtractions*, which were tolerable where he found them,

but ſpoilt in the *Application.* By talking of *Adequate, Inadequate,* and *Intermediate Idea's*; by the *Nominal and Real Eſſence of things*; *by frivolous diſtinctions between the Means of Information, and grounds of Perſwaſion*; *and by little Niceties concerning the degrees of Perſpicuity in Divine and Human Revelations*, &c. This is the method this grand Reformer takes, to reſtore Chriſtianity to it's *Native Simplicity*, and make it a Religion for all People. Whereas it is not One of ten Thouſand that knows the meaning of any of theſe Words and Phraſes, by which he *darkens* what is in it ſelf *Plain* and *Obvious*, and renders every thing in Religion a *Myſtery* to them. And yet this is the very Man that talks ſo much againſt the new Converted Philoſophers, *for confounding their Philoſophy and Divinity together*, and by that means, rendering every thing abſtruſe by *Terms.* And who rails at our Clergy for *darkning* every thing in Religion, and induſtriouſly concealing it from the People.

P. 154.

2. As to the *Real Deſign* of this Man, 'tis plain it is no other than what he formerly declar'd, and what he openly affects, *viz.* to be the *Head* of a Sect, and ſet

ſet up for a *Reformer*. For beſides many *General Expreſſions*, he hath ſeveral very particular ones to this purpoſe, as where he ſays, *That the very nature and uſe of* P. 165. *the Sacraments are abſolutely perverted and deſtroy'd, and are not yet fully reſtor'd by the pureſt Reformations in Chriſtendom.* And that Expreſſion in the cloſe of his Book. *Becauſe ſeveral turn'd Libertines and Atheiſts, when Prieſt-craft was laid ſo open at the Reformation*; were Luther, Calvin, or Zwinglius *to be blam'd for it?* which is ſpoke by way of Defence of that great Reformation he intends, whatever the ill Conſequences of it are.

Now the *Method* he hath taken to effect this grand Deſign of his, is firſt to *Amuſe* the generality of People with a little ſhew of Learning, by *hard Words*, and ſeveral impertinent *Quotations* to get a Reputation among them.

His next *Buſineſs* was, to inſinuate into the Minds of People a diſ-eſteem of the Religion they now profeſs, and make them believe that *Chriſtianity*, as it is now receiv'd, is no better than *Heatheniſm*; *Sect.* 3. *C.* vi. which he doth by comparing them in ſeveral inſtances, and tells us plainly, *He hath ſaid enough to ſhew how the Divine Inſtitutions of Chriſtianity, through the* P. 163.

Craft and Ambition of Prieſts and Philoſophers, did degenerate into meer Paganiſm. He calls our Principles *narrow bigoted Tenets.* And in ſhort, ſays, *they are a Myſtery of Iniquity.* He calls the *preſent Theology*, the *Gibberiſh of our Divinity Schools*, and the *Language of the Beaſt.* He wou'd
P. 141. have *no Ceremonies*, no *Times*, *Places* or
P. 167. *Particular Actions* for the Worſhip of God, *&c.*

And notwithſtanding all theſe *virulent Expreſſions*, and many more through his whole Book, againſt the Religion profeſt and eſtabliſh't among us; He ſays, *That*
Preface. *ſuch is the deplorable condition of our Age,*
P. 2. *that a Man dares not openly and directly own what he thinks of Divine Matters, if it but very ſlightly differ from what is receiv'd by any Party; or that is eſtabliſh't by Law.* And therefore, He that hath openly ſaid ſo much already, what is it he wou'd not ſay, were it not for the *Laws?* Undoubtedly he hath a great deal more to ſay, whenever this new SECT of his becomes ſo numerous, that they ſhall outbrave the Laws, and labour for a *Publick Reformation* of all the Myſterious Doctrines of the Goſpel.

Had this Man made any of the *Myſteries* of our Religion more *clear and intel-*

ligible

ligible than they were before, He had done worthily; and might have hop'd for a Reward from God, and *Eſteem* from Men; And the Miniſters of the Goſpel wou'd have been ſo far from reſenting it, that they wou'd have thank'd him for it, and not fail'd to have acquainted their People with it. But by this *Scurrilous Libel upon* all theſe Doctrines which are the ground and foundation of Chriſtianity; and by *Railing* at all the Teachers and Profeſſors of it for ſixteen hundred Years, as if they had all been *Fools*, and *Knaves*, and *Bigots* at the beſt, till He appear'd in the World; He is juſtly become odious and deteſtable by all Men, who have any concern left for the Chriſtian Religion.

'Tis true, he hath *ſet his Forehead like a Flint*, and is prepar'd with *Obſtinacy* and *Reſolution* againſt all that can be ſaid or done againſt him. *For God knows he no more values this ridiculous Nick-name of an Heretick, than* Paul *did before him.* But ſure there is a great deal of difference between St. *Paul*'s being call'd a *Heretick* for Preaching the *Reſurrection of the Dead*, and ſaying *the manner of it is Myſterious.* And this Man's *Contradicting* him, and ſaying, *the manner of it is not Myſterious*; and by his *Principles*, undermining the

P. 172. *Acts* 24. 14. 1 *Cor.* 15. 5.

foundation of all Reveal'd and Natural Religion.

Another way of effecting what he designs, is by loading the *Clergy* in general with *Reproaches*, and charging them with most detestible *Frauds* to serve the vilest ends. He declares himself in his Preface, *An open implacable Enemy to all Clergymen, who make a meer Trade of Religion, and build an unjust Authority upon the Consciences of the Laity* (i. e.) to all Clergymen who are not of his Opinion, he is a profest Adversary; and *He hopes every good and wise Man will be the same.* Nay, the whole *Race* and *Order*, he calls *an Usurpation on Mankind, and a Diabolical and Antichristian Tyranny*; and says, *That by the assistance of Mysteries we first erected our selves into a distinct* Order, and one *separate Body*; as if there were no such Order instituted and appointed by our Blessed Saviour. And to make us sure that this is his Opinion, He says plainly, *He sees no reason why all Men indifferently, shou'd not as lawfully teach, as they are bound to practice their Religion.* And again, *why Women might not enjoy the Priviledge of instructing others, in the Religious Duties they are bound to practice themselves, He wants still to be inform'd.* That they may

P. 166. *Preface.*

P. 22. *Preface to the Lady's Religion.*

teach

teach their Children and Servants in private, all the World allows; So that his meaning is, that they may Preach in Publick as well as Men, though this be contrary to the expreſs words of Scripture.

He inſinuates every where that our *Profeſſion is but a Craft*; and calls it a *Trade*; and our Religious Myſteries a *Contrivance only to bring us Gain and Credit*: As if we had no ſenſe at all of Religion, and that a little vain Glory and Profit were all our aim. *Preface.* P. 19.

He levels the whole Book mainly at the *Clergy*, and doth all he can to render us odious in the ſight of the People. And to do it more effectually, he all along makes the *Clergy* and *Laity* two oppoſite Parties, and endeavours to raiſe in them jealouſies and ſuſpicions of our gulling and abuſing them, in order to prejudice and incenſe them againſt us. And that his Sophiſtry might paſs upon them the better, he paints us out under the notion of *Heathen Prieſts*; he draws *their Picture*, and then leaves the *Laity* to miſtake it for *ours*; endeavouring every where, to make all People of his Faith, who thinks that *Prieſts of all Religions are the ſame*.

What this Man advances here, is but a Branch of that bitter Root of *Socinianiſm*, which

which hath opened a *Door* for introducing and reviving many of those *Heresies*, which have formerly infested the Church, and troubled the Faith of Christians. These Men differ among themselves, and there is as great variety of them as there were of the *Arians* formerly; yet they all agree in Destroying Reveal'd Religion and the establisht Doctrine of that Church, of which they yet profess themselves Members. Thus these *Vermin* engendred in the Body of it, at the same time they strike at one another, do all equally contribute to devour the whole, from whence they first deriv'd their life and being.

I hope I need not here enter into a *Defence* of our Order, or make any long *Apology* for the Ministers of the Gospel. This one Book of his, is a sufficient Proof of the *Necessity* and *Usefulness* of the *Clergy*; for had it not been for us, such ridiculous *Sophisms* as these might have pass'd with the People for sound Reasoning. If it were not for them, whose business it is to confute the Arguments of these pretenders to *Reason*, to lay open their *Fallacies*, and detect their *Villanous Designs*; there won'd not, in a little time, be so much as a *Face* of Religion among us. And if the *Experiment* were not too dangerous, and

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the conſequences of it never to be retriv'd, there cou'd not be a greater demonſtration of the *Neceſſity* and *Uſefulneſs* of the Clergy, than the univerſal deſiſting of their endeavours only for a very ſhort ſpace, for then all Religion would degenerate into Barbarity and Heatheniſm.

If we are guilty of all theſe *Villanies* with which this Man brands us, there is no puniſhment either in this World, or the next too bad for us. But if we are not, and that this Man doth not make out what he ſo poſitively aſſerts, then what will he deſerve? We appeal to any *Power* that is able to take account of the matter; And if the ſtrength of all Laws *Eccleſiaſtical* and *Civil* ſhould once be ſo relax't, that every one may openly vent what they pleaſe againſt the *Chriſtian Religion*, and it's *Teachers*, without reſtraint (which God forbid) than we muſt leave it to him to defend his own *Cauſe*.

The World is at this time ſo diſpos'd for the reception of all Diſcourſes that ſeem to ſet up *Reaſon* and *Evidence* in oppoſition to the *Reveal'd and Myſterious Doctrines of Chriſtianity*, that nothing leſs than the *Interpoſition of Authority*, can ſtop this current of *Infidelity* and *Prophaneſs* which threatens to overwhelm theſe Nations.

How

How far Men in Power, according to to their ſeveral ſtations, are oblig'd to intermeddle in point of *Conſcience*, I ſhall not now *enquire*. But ſure I am in point of *Policy*, it is become no leſs than neceſſary. For the writers of this *Strain* have given broad *Hints*, that they are as little Friends, to our *Government*, as our *Religion*. This Man can ſay, *That Magiſtrates are made for the People*, and every one knows, what *Doctrines of Rebellion* Men are won't to inſinuate by this *ſaying*. And again he ſays. *That God alone, and ſuch as are inſpir'd by him can preſcribe Injunctions relating to the World to come, whilſt Human Powers regulate the Affairs of this.* By which 'tis plain his meaning is, that they have nothing to do, to meddle any way in the Affairs of Religion. Now what would this man have ſaid, if he durſt have ſpoke as plainly of *Government* as he hath done of *Religion*?

Pref.

Whoſoever obſerves theſe Men's way of writing as to this one point, will be convinc'd they deſerve to be look'd too; Their Numbers grow *Formidable*, They begin to ſpeak out their *Infidelity* and *Prophaneneſs*, as plain as ſome of them do *Treaſon*; they are ſecretly *forming* themſelves into *Clubs* and *Caballs*, and have their

their *Emiſſaries* into all parts, which are ſupported by Contributions: And I make little doubt, but that their deſign is at length to ſhew us, That all *Dominion* as well as *Religion* is founded in Reaſon.

POSTSCRIPT.

I Have deſignedly left the Conſideration of thoſe *Paſſages* he cites out of the *Fathers*, to the laſt, to be conſider'd by themſeves; becauſe many Perſons who will read the *rational* part, don't care for troubling themſelves with the Examination of theſe. And indeed, becauſe I deſign'd to dwell much longer upon them, than I find the length of this *Letter* already will permit.

The very *Quoting* of the *Fathers*, is a confutation of himſelf; for if there be no other ground of Perſwaſion but *Evidence*, what can the *Authority* of the Fathers ſignifie to encline Mens Aſſent either one way or the other? and indeed, of Scripture it ſelf? All *Quotations Divine* or *Human* are uſeleſs and impertinent upon his Principles. For what he wou'd perſwade by them is evident in it ſelf or it is not.

not. If it be evident, we shall certainly believe it, let who will say it; but if the truth of it be not evident from the nature of the thing it self, all the *Pompous* Citations in the World signifie nothing.

He was sensible of this, and that is the true reason why he gives the *Father's* as foul language, as he doth the modern Clergy; not considering that the same Objection holds against the Bible it self. For if the Authority of God be not a ground of Perswasion, than a Text out of the Bible will be of as little force, as a Quotation out of any fabulous Heathen Author, to influence our Assent to any Proposition.

He introduces them after the most scornful manner he could contrive, and says, that the mentioning of *Schutcheons puts him in mind of the Judgment of the Primitive Church.* And in another place he hath this Expression, by way of ridicule, *The Fathers, The admir'd Fathers!* their *Opinions* he calls *Whymsies.* And their Works *insuperable Labyrinths.* And calls the just Esteem we have for them, *A Blind Veneration for those who liv'd before us.* He never mentions them without the *greatest contempt*, and says, *He is not to be put out of countenance*

tenance by Venerable names, and Pompous Citations, that have no value, but ſuch as an ugly Ruſt and Colour give antient Coins.

But this *ſimilitude* that he deſigns by way of deriſion, doth very well expreſs the worth and uſefulneſs of the Fathers. For as antient Coins are now of no greater intrinſick value than the bare weight of the Metal they are made of; yet they are of excellent uſe to give us light into the times and cuſtoms of Antiquity, and upon that ſcore are of vaſtly greater value than any modern Coins. So it is with the Fathers; they were *Men*, and wrote like ſuch; and though we ſhould grant that ſome of their works, are not in themſelves more excellent than what hath been written in after Ages; yet theſe Writings of theirs are much more to be valu'd, becauſe they liv'd nearer the times of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and therefore had greater advantages of coming to right apprehenſions of all things relating to Chriſtianity, than it is poſſible for any after them to have. Not but that ſome of them ſeem to have wrote by a more peculiar influence of the Spirit.

And therefore this Mans arrogant treatment of the Fathers, puts me in mind of that paſſage of the *ignorant Childrens reviling*

reviling the Prophet, and calling him Bald-pate; who saw nothing of him beyond those *common infirmities* that are incident to *Human Nature*, and did not discern any thing of the Divine Spirit that was in him.

We do not blindly and implicitely acquiesce in any thing they say, but we have a just Veneration for them, and deference to their Authority; And if he could have produced any thing from them which had made against us, we would have own'd he had gain'd a great point. But all the Citations he produces, are only to prove that the things reveal'd under the Gospel, were call'd Mysteries under the Law; and That the Vail is taken away, both which we allow. Let him bring one Text out of the *Bible*, or one Quotation out of the *Fathers*, to prove that the Vail is taken away in the sense that we deny, (*i. e.*) in respect of the true Nature, and real Properties of those things which we call Mysteries. For that it is taken away as to the *Existence* of those things, and as to the *Relation* they have to us, as to the intent and design of them we allow.

And this is a sufficient answer to all his Quotations, if he brought a thousand more to the same purpose he hath done these.

these. However I shall consider them in particular. And

1. He says *Clemens Alexandrinus* hath the same notion of Mysteries with him. For he says the Christian Discipline was call'd φωτισμὸς or *illumination, because it brought hidden things to light.* Very true. *But not because it brought them so to light, as to discover the real Nature and Properties of every thing revealed; and give us as clear and distinct notions of all divine things as they are in themselves, as we have even of sensible Objects,* Which this Man ridiculously contends for. And this he would have seen if he had read but Ten Lines farther, where he has this Expression. *STROM. Lib. 5.

Ὁ γὰρ πρὸ ὅλων Θεὸς, ὁ ὑπὲρ πᾶσαν φωνὴν καὶ πᾶν νόημα καὶ πᾶσαν ἔννοιαν, οὐκ ἄν ποτε γένοιτο παραδοθεὶς, ἀρρήτῳ ὢν &c.

By which he affirms the nature of God, to be above all we can conceive or speak of of him. So that 'tis plain the Father in direct opposition to this *Scribler*, is of opinion that God is still *Mysterious*, notwithstanding all the Revelations we have of him.

The whole drift of the former part of that 5th. Book, is to shew that the true nature of *FAITH*, consists in giving our assent

assent to the truth of things which we cannot know, upon the Authority of God; and to this he applies that Text of the Apostle, 1. *Cor.* 2. 5. where he adviseth us *that our Faith should not be founded on the Wisdom of Men*, who as he explains it *pretend to make us know every thing we believe.* But on the *Veracity of God*, who saves us by *pure Faith*, without that *Evidence* of the thing it self, which some Men require. The Father's own words are these.

Ἵνα ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν μὴ ᾖ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων ΤΩΝ ΠΕΙΘΕΙΝ ΕΠΑΓΓΕΛΛΟΜΕΝΩΝ, ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει θεοῦ, ΤΙ ΜΟΝΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΕΥ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΟΔΕΙΞΕΩΝ, ΔΙΑ ΨΙΛΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΣΩΖΕΙΝ ΔΥΝΑΜΕΝΗ.

and therefore he elegantly calls Faith *the Ears of the Soul*, πίστις ἦ ὦτα ψυχῆς because by this we are dispos'd, to listen to Discourses of those things which we cannot comprehend. Not that he supposes we are ignorant of the meaning of any Proposition we believe, and therefore he says

Ἤδη δέ, ὅτε ἡ γνῶσις ἄνευ πίστεως, ἢ ἡ πίστις ἄνευ γνώσεως

There is no Knowledge without Faith, nor Faith without Knowledge.

And

And he here makes a manifest difference, between that *Assent* which is the immediate effect of Knowledge, and that which is properly *Faith*. And then asketh this Question

Τις οὖν ἔτι ΑΘΕΟΣ ἀπιστεῖν θεῷ, καὶ τὰς ΑΠΟΔΕΙΞΕΙΣ ὡς παρὰ ἀνθρώπων ἀπαιτεῖν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Who is so estranged from God, so much an Infidell, as not to believe him upon his word; but require the same Evidence, and clear Knowledge of the things reveal'd from God, as he requires from [illegible] I answer, This Man of unparalle[illegible]dence, who hath quoted this same [illegible] *Book* of his, against *himself* and *us*, to prove the quite contrary to what he thus positively asserts.

The next Father he Quotes against us, is *Justin Martyr*. Who says, *Moses with his hands stretcht out at the Battle with the Amalakites, was a Type of Christ Crucified.* And He useth these words *Tipe, Simbol, Mystery*, &c. *to signify things once hid, but now reveal'd.* So do we all to this day use these words, to express those things which were once hid, and now reveal'd; and yet there are Mysteries in the Christian Religion for all that. And if he will look into his Tract of a *True Confession of Faith*,

He will never again cite this Father against us, at least in this Controversy; but call him all to nought as he hath done us. When he had been speaking of the Union of the Divine and Human Nature in the Person of Christ, and propos'd many intricate and insuperable difficulties concerning this Article of our Faith, *Perhaps* says he *these unconceivable difficulties may perplex your mind, and stagger your Faith. As for me when I am in any perplexity about these* CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES, *I cry out.*

Ὅτι ὑπὲρ νοῦν, ὑπὲρ ΛΟΓΟΝ, ὑπὲρ καταλήψιν κτιστῆς φύσεως τὰ ἡμέτερα.

That these things of our Religion are above our faculties of Knowledge, above REASON, above the capacities of created Nature.

And it follows, *That there is no other Solution to be given of these things, but that of a READY FAITH.* He argues moreover, the impossibility of coming to the true knowledge of these Divine Objects, *from the disproportion there is between them, and our present capacities.* And ask's this Question.

Πῶς ἢ ὅλως ἐδεδίαντες τὴν τόλμαν, τὰ θεῖα ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΕΙΝ ἐπιχειροῦντες.

With

With what Confidence *can he go about to give an exact Solution of Divine things?* I leave this man who is concern'd, to give him an answer.

The next Quotation is out of *Tertullian*, who hath this expression in his Apology. *Cum vel ex Famâ omnibus Mysteriis silentij fides habeatur* &c. He is in that place defending the Christians, from those crimes of *Incest*, *Adultery*, and *murdering* of Children, which the Heathen charged them, as being guilty of in their meetings. That they were groundless Rumours and nothing more, He argues thus; *These things must be first discovered either by our selves, or others; not by others, because they have no way to know them, but by such as are privy to them; not by our selves, for none who are guilty of such horrid Crimes, would discover things which must expose them to the immediate punishment of the Laws, though the vengeance of God were deferr'd.*

And the force of the comparison with the Heathen Mysteries lies in this. If the Samothracian and Eleusinian Mysteries are kept so secret, which are not of such dangerous consequence to discover; How much more must you think such Horrid and dangerous Mysteries as you suppose ours to be, will be kept secret. And his Inference is very natural viz. *That these things must needs be meer Rumour, since if they were true, they would not be discover'd*; or, *if they were discover'd, must expect no mercy from the Heathen, who would be sure not to spare them.* And therefore he says.

Dicimur sceleratissimi, dicimur tamen semper; nec vos quod tam diu Dicimur eruere curatis. Ergò aut eruite si creditis, aut nolite credere qui non eruistis. This is the whole scope of the place, and how this man will wrest his Inference out of it. *Ergò, There are no Mysteries in Christianity,* I can't imagine.

The last He cites is *Origen.* Who says, *That the Doctrines of our Religion do all agree with our* COMMON NOTIONS. (i. e.) as far as we are able to know of them. But this doth not prove, *That there is nothing more intended by them, than what we Know as well, as we do the ordinary Objects of our Senses.*

Again He says, *The Land of Promise was a Type of Heaven.* This Mans Inference is, *Ergò, Now this is known, the state and condition of the blest in Heaven can be no Mystery to us.*

That whole sixth Book of his against *Celsus* is to shew, the direct contrary to what this Man insists upon in his last Chap. *viz.* To prove against that Heretick, *That the Mysteries of the Christian Religion, were not Originally deriv'd from the Idolatrous and Superstitious Customs of the Heathen.* Let him answer that Book before he sets about answering Mine.

These are all his *Pompous* Citations from the Fathers, to prove what no one denies. *That the Vail is removed,* and that therefore nothing in Christianity, *no not the Nature of God is Mysterious.*

Now

Now after all, I find this is no new *Hereſie*, but an old one of *Eunomius* reviv'd, who affirmed, *The Real true Nature of God to be intelligible by us*, which was long ago confuted in all the branches of it by St. *Baſil.* *Baſil. Con. Eunom.*

It is to no purpoſe to heap up Quotations here, to prove that the opinion of the Fathers was, *That we know nothing of the true Nature of God*, there is not any thing which occurs more frequently in them, and that they are more expreſs in *Greg. Nazianzen* calls God ΑΓΝΩΣΤΟΣ, and in the ſame Hymn to God he hath this Verſe. *Hymnus ad Deum.*

Πῶς νόος ἁθρήσει σε; σὺ γὰρ νόῳ ὐδενὶ λητὸς.

How can the Mind frame any Notion of thee, who art incomprehenſible?

Having thus ſhewn to how little purpoſe his Citations out of the Fathers are, and how the Nature of God is truely Myſterious; Becauſe what I have ſpoke, concerning our manner of forming *Idea's* of God, and the things of another World, may look a little odd at firſt ſight; as if I turned all Religion into *Allegory*, and by that means deſtroy the *Reality* and *Subſtance* of it. I ſhall ſhew that this is no new *Doctrine* of mine, but the Opinion of the Fathers.

Tertullian *ſays, That God hath no other way of intercourſe with Men, but by taking on him our Senſes and Affections, by which he accommodates, the inſupportable Majeſty* *Contr. Marcionem. Lib. 2. Cap. 27.*

of his Nature, to our frail and imperfect state.

Deus non potuit humanos congressus inire, nisi humanos & sensus & affectus suscepisset, per quos vim Majestatis suæ intolerabilem, utiq; humanæ mediocritati humilitate temperaret.

Lib. 12. Contra Eunomium Hæret. *Gregory Nyssen,* Discoursing at large, how the sacred Style was accommodated to our Capacity, by expressing the nature of God and divine things, under the notion of such things as are familiar to us; adds these words, *For how,* says he, *could that Immensity be contain'd in a little? were it not that those things are brought down to our shallow Capacities.*

Πῶς γὰρ ἐν τῷ μικρῷ χωρηθείη τὸ μέγα; ἀλλὰ τῇ βραχύτητι τῆς ἡμετέρας συγκατιοῦσαν δυνάμεως.

Dionysius speaking of this Symbolical and Figurative way of conceiving, and expressing the things of another World, calls those things by which they are represented to us ἱερὰ συνθήματα, *signa, figmenta,* which is better render'd by the English word *Substitutes.* And he adds, that the τυπωτικὰ καὶ πολύμορφα are the Substitutes τῶν ἀμορφώτων καὶ ἀτυπώτων. Those things which have Form and Figure, are the Representatives of those Divine Things which have none. Again,

Epist. 9. ad Ti.

Dionysius says, it is impossible for us to contemplate the nature of immaterial Objects, any other way than by help of those notions, we frame of those things which are material.

Cap. 1. de Cæl. Hi.

Μηδὲ

Μηδὲ δυνατὸν ἐστι τῷ καθ' ἡμᾶς νοΐ, πρὸς τὴν ἄϋλον ἐκείνην ἀναταθῆναι τῶν οὐρανίων ἱεραρχιῶν θεωρίαν, εἰ μὴ τῇ κατ' αὐτὴν ὑλαίᾳ χειραγωγίᾳ χρήσαιτο.

St. *Cyrill* says that our manner of conceiving Divine things, is by Examples or Similitudes; after the same gross manner we represent the heavenly Orbs upon a piece of Paper.

Διὸ δὴ τοῖς ἰδίοις ἔθεσιν ἐπ' αὐτοῦ κεχρήμεθα, τὰ καθ' ἑαυτοὺς μεζόνων ὑπόδειγμα ποιούμενοι, ὥσπερ οἱ ἐν μικρῷ πίνακι τὸν οὐράνιον καταγράφον, τὸν κύκλον.

Gregory Nazianzen discourses fully, how nothing is more evident than that there is a God, though at the same time we are not able to conceive or express what he is; and hath these remarkable words concerning our manner of conceiving the things of another world. *Orat.* 34.

Ὥσπερ ἀδύνατον ὑπερβῆναι τὴν ἑαυτοῦ σκιάν, — ἢ τοῖς ὁρατοῖς πλησιάσαι τὸν ὄψιν δίχα τοῦ ἐν μέσῳ φωτὸς καὶ ἀέρος, — οὕτως ἀμήχανον τοῖς ἐν σώματι, δίχα τῶν σωματικῶν πάντη γενέσθαι μετὰ τῶν νουμένων.

By which he plainly supposes it as impossible for us, whilst we are immers'd in these gross Bodies, to frame any conceptions of Spiritual things, without the help of worldly Objects; as it is for us to overtake our shadow, or to see in the dark.

It is ordinary with the *Fathers*, speaking of God to say, That when we conceive him as being a *Substance*, as being *Wise* and *Holy*, nay as having *Life*. &c. they are all but *Figurative Representations* of something in God which transcends all that we can imagin. *Dionysius*,

Chap. 13. de Div. No. *Dionysius*, or whoever was Author of those Books which go under his Name, says,

Ἐν αὐτῷ μόνῳ καὶ τὸ ἀνούσιον, οὐσίας ὑπερβολὴ. καὶ τὸ ἄζωον, ὑπερέχουσα ζωὴ. καὶ τὸ ἄνουν, ὑπερέχουσα σοφία. καὶ ὅσα ἐν τ' ἀγαθῷ τῆς τῶν ἀνειδέων ἐστὶν ὑπεροχικῆς εἰδοποιΐας.

And accordingly in his *Mystical Theology*, speaking of the nature of our present knowledge of God and Spiritual things, says very aptly that this is,

δι' ΑΒΛΕΨΙΑΣ, καὶ ΑΓΝΩΣΙΑΣ ΙΔΕΙΝ.

And therefore God in the writings of the Fathers is call'd ἀνύπαρκτος, ἀνοῦσιος, ἄνους, ἄζωος. *without Existence, without Substance, without a Mind, without Life.* Not by way of *Privation*, as *Marius Victorinus* in his 4th. Book against *Arius* observes, but by way of *Excellence*. Because the notions affixt to these words, express nothing of the true nature of the things when refer'd to God. Very agreeable to what the Apostle says, *Acts* 17, 27. Where he expresseth the Knowledge we have of God, by *Feeling after him*. The Original word ψηλαφήσειαν is very expressive, for it signifies the groping for a thing in the dark.

Strom. Lib. 5. *Clemens Alexandrinus* speaking of the method we have of coming to know the nature of God, says, *That the utmost we can arrive to, is to know what he is not, and not what he is.*

οὐκ ὁ ἐστὶν, ὃ δὲ μὴ ἐστὶ γνωρίσαντες.

And thus we see how little reason this Man had

to

to quote those *Fathers* who, he tells us, *have the good luck to be both the New, and the Old of the World.* But His Heresy is as old as *Eunomius*, and now reviv'd by this UPSTART *as he very aptly calls himself.* And I think we may well call this *New Old* Sect of his, the *Gnosticks* of our Age, since they are a profound sort of People, who set up for *Knowing* every thing, and *Believing* nothing.

He hopes in time to plead *Prescription*, and that *His Book too shall in after ages be valued, as the Fathers are in this.* But alas! though he wants no qualification of *Error*, and *Impiety* for this Ambition of his; yet he hath not Wit and Learning enough, to be a *Heretick* upon *Record.* Such Books as these seldom live any longer, than till their *Follacies* are laid open; and then they perish, and *Rot* with the *Memory* of their *Authors.* Whereas the *Fathers* (who are now in Heaven for defending that Truth, which he hath labour'd to corrupt) will have their just *Authority*, among all Pious and Learned Men to the end of the World.

And now that I have done, I must confess the *Man* was not worth my trouble; but the *Cause* is richly so, and it is our misfortune that we think nothing can gain upon the World but *sound Reasoning* and *Argument.* Whereas there have been many instances, of the most *odd* and *ridiculous Enthusiasts* having in a short time *Proselytes* enough, to bring *Church* and *State* into confusion. He hath as little of true *Reasoning or Argument* as any of them, but

but his *Pretence* is plausible; and those are the Books which do mischief in the World. And therefore I was not to consider the *strength* only of the *Poyson*, but the constitution of the Age, which seems strangely dispos'd for *Infidelity*, and a *Contempt* of all Divine Revelation.

Besides, I have contriv'd this Letter, so as to be an answer not only to him, but to all the *Opposers* of *Revelation* and *Mysteries*. And I hope I may say, I have done something towards the right stateing this whole *Controversy*, which hath been hitherto so much mistaken on both Sides. For whilst Men on one hand, expect a rational account, and clear and distinct Idea's of what is wholly *Unaccountable* by us, and of which we can have no *Conceptions*, at all. And on the other hand, Men go about with endless labour, to explain what is *Inexplicable*; there can be no end of these *Controversies* which multiply upon us every day. But if we all agree to leave off speaking of what we know nothing of, and freely own what we must confess whether we will or no; *That we can have no Ideas at all, of the things of another World as they are in themselves*; and *that our manner of conceiving them at present, is by Intervention of the common Objects of this Life*, then the whole controversy will be reduced to a very short Issue. And all the *Revelations* and *Mysteries of* Christianity, establisht upon those foundations which Christ hath laid; *Not in the Wisdom of Men but in the Power of God.*

Trin. Coll. Dub.
May 1. 1697.

F I N I S.